

“Evenings in the Court of Paradise”

Religion, Science and Gender in the
Work of Eliza Lynn Linton.

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October 2003.

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Eliza Lynn Linton.

womanhood. —

I pray you with all my
strength to keep me as
attendant at the Ethnological
meetings. & when you are going
to discard hazardous papers.
Give us warning, & we will
stay away. Else, like us be
pre sent to attend —

I do not ask for an answer
to this. & apologise very
sincerely for the length of
my letter — for it is a
petition not a letter — For me
personally their meeting seemed
well in their position is of priceless
value. It is the only way in which
we can be better, not having a husband
or a husband & any personal means
of making this acquaintance.

Yours respectfully E. Lynn Linton —

Gina Greaves
De Montfort University, Leicester.
October 2003.



Original hanging in Keswick Museum

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Abstract

By means of an analysis of her work on religion and science this thesis seeks to demonstrate the centrality of the Victorian novelist and journalist Eliza Lynn Linton (1822-1898) in these crucial areas of cultural debate, a position that has previously been obscured by her anti-feminist reputation. Beginning with a bio-bibliographical summary of Linton's life and work, this study then examines her reputation as an anti-feminist before discussing previous evaluations of the author. Identifying preceding judgments as largely limited to issues of gender, it argues that wider critical scrutiny, such as that undertaken by this study, discloses Linton and her work as of much greater significance than has hitherto been recognised.

Identifying religious doubt and anxiety, and the challenges that science was offering to cultural certainty, this thesis then interrogates the development of Linton's own agnosticism, her perception of religious belief as unmanly and a threat to social stability and national progress, finding Roman Catholicism particularly hazardous. Examining Linton's representation of religious belief as degenerative, it explores Linton's notion of agnosticism as the product of the application of masculine reason over feminine emotionalism; faith, in the form of Broad Church Anglicanism, remained necessary for those not yet intellectually equipped to abandon the social control that belief provides.

Examining Linton's advocacy of science, this study then considers the status of women in Victorian science and Linton's early scientific writing. It looks at the effect of the professionalisation of science, and evolutionary theory, on the notion of female inferiority. After reproducing a petition pleading for access to scientific societies, this study then contextualises Linton's religious and scientific positioning, before examining her treatment of the paranormal. Running through all areas of Linton's writing is her conviction that the pursuit of truth was of over-riding importance. This thesis then offers a consideration of Linton's conjoining of science and agnosticism before concluding that placing Linton in a wider historical and literary framework than she has hitherto enjoyed, reveals Eliza Lynn Linton as an important means of access into the Victorian psyche.

Acknowledgements

Having spent so much time in the company of Eliza Lynn Linton I find myself as exasperated, delighted and intrigued by her as when we first met. I felt sure when I embarked on this project that at its conclusion (which sometimes seemed very far away indeed) there would not be much I did not know about her or her work – now, as it finishes I am painfully aware that I have only begun to scratch the surface of the many and shifting complexities of this fascinating Victorian writer and journalist. I am also aware, given the polite but blank looks I receive from friends and colleagues foolish enough to enquire about the subject of my research, that Eliza Lynn Linton, though my constant companion, is not well known even among scholars whose interests encompass Victorian literature, women's writing and women's history. It is my hope that my thesis will help redress this situation and bring Linton a little closer to her deserved recognition as a significant literary and historical figure.

I am grateful to De Montfort University, Leicester, for the financial support I have received and to the academic and administrative staff of the English Department for their moral support and practical help.

I am also delighted to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Julian North, and especially Dr. Kathleen Bell, who have never failed to be anything other than encouraging, even in the face of tortuous prose and absent argument. I am still not entirely convinced by Dr. Bell's assertion that religion is "fun" but I will admit that it proved a rich and rewarding area for research.

Linton's letter to T H Huxley is reproduced by permission of the Archives of Imperial College London.

Lastly, and most importantly, thanks are long overdue for Chris (not least for his technical expertise) Andrew and Robert, without whose encouragement, support and patience I would not be in a position to write these words.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations within the body of the text.

CK	<u>The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland.</u>
UWL	<u>Under Which Lord?</u>
JD	<u>The True History of Joshua Davidson.</u>
Rebel	<u>The Rebel of the Family.</u>
MLL	<u>My Literary Life.</u>
TD	<u>The Second Youth of Theodora Desanges.</u>
In Haste	<u>In Haste and at Leisure.</u>
SW	<u>Sowing the Wind.</u>
Dundas	<u>The Atonement of Leam Dundas.</u>
OTM	<u>The One Too Many.</u>

In order to avoid confusion I have referred to Eliza Lynn Linton as Linton throughout, including when alluding to her before her marriage.

Where I have referred to her husband I have identified him by his full name or initials, thus she remains Linton, he is William Linton or W. J. Linton.

Preface

Eliza Lynn Linton has until very recently been a much neglected and sadly under-researched figure. Her literary output, both fiction and non-fiction, was formidable. In a career that lasted over fifty years she published more than twenty novels, numerous short stories and literally thousands of essays and articles in more than fifty different periodicals; yet it is for just one of these articles, “The Girl of the Period”, a piece in which Linton condemned contemporary womanhood as selfish, immoral and a threat to national stability, that she is best remembered (if she is remembered at all). Originally published anonymously in the Saturday Review, this highly controversial essay attacked the “modern” young women as immodest and immoral, and warned that society did not admire, and real men did not marry, these “loud and rampant” emulators of the demi-monde, preferring “the simple genuine girl of the past, with her tender little ways and pretty bashful modesties”.¹ Ostensibly focussed on the individual, “The Girl of the Period” and the hundreds of pieces on the same theme that followed, responded to the challenges being offered to the Victorian patriarchal system by the burgeoning, and increasingly vocal, women’s movement, challenges that Linton identified as threatening national integrity and the advancement of humankind, and against which she wrote with increasing fervour as the century, and the women’s rights movement, progressed. It was these articles, and her later novels in which she presents derogatory caricatures of the New Woman, that earned her the status of “Censor of Modern Womanhood” and the designation “anti-feminist” that customarily precedes a mention of her name.²

I do not mean to suggest that gender is not central in any analysis of Linton’s work or in the society she sought to inform and represent, indeed how could it not be when she was part of a culture that put gender before all things? Speculation over the likely sex of the author of any anonymous work, particularly if it was in any way controversial, could occupy critics as much as the work itself and when the truth was revealed, might have a considerable effect on its popular and critical reception. (The disclosing of Linton’s identity as author was to adversely affect the reception of several of her works). Sex was

¹ Linton, “The Girl of the Period” Saturday Review, March 14 1868. pp. 339-340.

² George Paston, “A Censor of Modern Womanhood” Fortnightly Review, Sept.1. 1901. pp. 505-519.

an issue that was fundamental in all her work, and in her own exceptional position as a *woman* journalist, a *woman* novelist and a “*woman* against women”. I therefore begin “The Woman Question” with an analysis of Linton’s anti-feminist reputation, the better to inform subsequent discussion of her position on issues of religion and science. This will include a review of both contemporary and recent reception of the author and her work, including George Somes Layard’s Mrs. Lynn Linton: Her Life, Letters and Opinions (1901), “A Censor of Modern Womanhood” (1901), The Singular Anomaly (1970) by Vineta Colby, Herbert van Thal’s Eliza Lynn Linton: The Girl of the Period (1979), Nancy Fix Anderson’s psychobiography Woman against Women in Victorian England (1987) and Valerie Sanders’ Eve’s Renegades (1996). Arguing that Linton is an undervalued literary and historical figure, I will suggest that her reputation as an anti-feminist curiosity, whilst significant, does not adequately contextualise her apparently paradoxical positioning in what was after all a paradoxical society, and serves to undermine her major contribution to an understanding of her age.

The “woman question”, although it patently runs through and informs all of Linton’s work, was not the only issue that was interrogated through her writing. Just as previously held notions concerning the roles of the sexes were undergoing intense questioning, so too were the foundations of religious certainty. The literal truth of the Bible, the authority of the church, the role of the clergy, the existence of God, were all subject to private and public speculation. Linton’s religious positioning will be explored primarily, though by no means exclusively, through an examination of what are considered her “religious” novels, The True History of Joshua Davidson, Christian and Communist (1872), Under Which Lord? (1879) and The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland (1885). In this section I will suggest that the concept of the Victorian age as one shot through with religious anxiety finds support in Linton’s writing, much of which was fiercely antagonistic toward church establishment and clergy. This section will discuss the challenges to religious certainty that society was experiencing and situate the development of Linton’s personal doctrine in comparison to social and intellectual pressures. Placing this in an historical framework, it will consider the development of the author’s own agnosticism and her manipulation of changing patterns of belief into a questioning of all religious faith.

In this section I will also offer an analysis of how both class and gender impact on patterns of religious belief in Linton's work and will interrogate her notion of the masculinity of agnosticism versus the femininity of faith. I will also consider how, paradoxically, despite her own freethinking scepticism, she remained convinced that belief remained necessary for the "weaker brethren", amongst whom she included women and the working classes, because of what she perceived as their intrinsic moral and intellectual inferiority. Interrogating her use of the family as a metaphor for society and empire, I will consider Linton's literary oppositions of the authority of church and family and explore her contention that the breaking down of "natural" sexual difference must inevitably lead to the feminisation of society. Having scrutinised the concept of "muscular Christianity", in juxtaposition with Linton's habitual representations of clergymen and Roman Catholicism as "womanly", I shall consider her portrayal of religious belief as socially divisive and a threat to both national identity and integrity.

Central to Linton's religious iconoclasm was her perception of religious faith as an illogical devotion to superstitious, backward myth that acted as a curb to moral and intellectual progress. Linton identified in science an authority to which pursuit of truth was of over-riding importance and which would irrevocably dispel the esoteric and transcendental myth of religious belief, heralding a new and vital stage in the evolution of mankind.

In the "science" section I will place the challenges that developments in science were offering to religious certainty in an historical framework and consider Linton's advocacy of science and her understanding of its implications for the future. I will interrogate the status and history of women in the masculine world of science and consider the strategies that Linton employed in order to participate with and in scientific debate without stepping beyond the bounds of propriety. Anthropological endorsement of female inferiority (with which Linton concurred) gave impetus to the exclusion of women from science (which Linton bitterly regretted) and this section reproduces a letter, never before published in its entirety, in which Linton petitions for women's renewed access to the meetings and lectures of the Scientific Societies.

In the history of her life, The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland, Linton detailed the intellectual and emotional origins of her religious scepticism, central to which were the challenges that evolutionary theory and the empirical truth of science were offering to the unprovable chimera of religion. A consideration of the doubts and anxieties that she experienced, and which she discusses in Kirkland, reveals that in her uncertainties she was by no means unique, though her precocity and positioning made her sufficiently unusual to warrant investigation, and this section offers an evaluation of Linton in comparison to a number of her contemporaries; suggesting that she offers both an authentic insight into the heart of a great cultural anxiety and a gradation of rational and measured responses against which others may be judged.

Linton's confidence in the intellectual and moral progress of mankind is often iterated through a juxtaposition of the past, represented by religion, and the future, represented by science. This theme, explored even in her early, pre-Darwin work, authenticates her conviction that science, rather than complementing faith, serves to negate it. An examination of Linton's treatment of spiritualism and the supernatural, placed in an historical context, reveals that the possibility of the existence of common ground between science and religion was one that Linton alternately hoped for and feared; her attitude toward the quasi-scientific nature of spiritualism was as ambiguous as the subject itself. In latter years the possibility of a concordat between them became increasingly unacceptable to her and she registered her disapproval by drawing a correlation between faddishness, which included a belief in the supernatural, and immorality and decadence.

Serving as a contrast to Linton's hypocritical, feminised clergymen, her representation of scientific men as the epitome of sincere English masculinity restates her insistence that science provides the means of achieving social advance, an advance that Linton suggests is rooted in egalitarianism. Professing to hold communist views herself, Linton rarely goes so far as to make her scientific heroes advocate anything more than treating people fairly and with respect. However, an examination of even her ideal men reveals

them as flawed, suggesting that despite her confidence in the power of science, her confidence in the men of science was not so sanguine.

Linton's defence of agnosticism and advocacy of science are made explicit in a little known essay, "A Protest and a Plea". Science revealed truth, truth above all things was paramount; together they confirmed that agnosticism was the only logical stance for an honourable and ethical individual to adopt, an argument that she makes plain in her essay. However, the importance of "A Protest and a Plea" goes beyond its significance as an affirmation of Linton's scepticism and her advocacy of science over religion. Its presence as part of the public debate between such respected and eminent Victorians, relating to issues so fundamental to cultural identity, is indicative of the respect that her opinions were afforded by her contemporaries and serves as a verification of the contention of this thesis: that Eliza Lynn Linton offers a much wider and more comprehensive means of admission to the tensions and anxieties of the Victorian age than has previously been acknowledged. To appropriate the (almost) title of Andrea Broomfield's paper on Linton's role as a Victorian journalist, Eliza Lynn Linton was much more than just an anti-feminist.³

Much of what we know of the details of Linton's life is derived from The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland (1885) which, despite its title, is the autobiography of Linton herself, and from a 1901 biography, Mrs. Lynn Linton: Her Life, Letters and Opinions, that drew heavily on Kirkland as its source.⁴ But, as could be expected, even these texts are ambiguous, not least because Linton chose to write her life through the male persona of Christopher Kirkland, transposing the sex of many, but not all, of her relatives, friends and acquaintances; Layard, who considered Linton's strategy bizarre, changed them back. This thesis in turn will draw on Kirkland, and like Layard, will attempt where necessary to "regularise" the sex and identity of those whom it discusses, though as an aid to comprehension rather than as a critical judgement.

³ Andrea L. Broomfield, "Much more than an Antifeminist: Eliza Lynn Linton's Contribution to the Rise of Victorian Popular Journalism" Victorian Literature and Culture, Spring 2000.

⁴ George Somes Layard, Mrs. Lynn Linton: Her Life, Letters and Opinions Methuen, London. 1901.

Thanks to the wonders of the Internet, certain of Linton's works are now available in downloadable copies, although most of her writing remains little known and often difficult to obtain.⁵ I have endeavoured where possible to draw on more accessible texts, but have not done so exclusively; therefore, where necessary I have quoted at length from the works used, the better to inform my thesis.

Given that much of Linton's work is little known, and the circumstances of her life obscure, I will begin by providing a biography of the author, together with a summary of her literary career, offering rather more detail than might be necessary for other, better known subjects, in order to place Eliza Lynn Linton within an historical and literary framework. Aside from the remarkable circumstances of her life that in themselves are absorbing, an acquaintance with Linton's personal history not only informs the analysis and interpretation of her work but also offers a valuable means of access, not only to the society to whom she addressed her writing and whose anxieties she sought to confront, but also gives an insight into the distinctive, and often slippery qualities which make her typically "Victorian". This term is in itself so open to multiple definition that it can be employed as a means of conferring any number of apparently contradictory attributes and whose meaning is constantly shifting depending on the age, class, race, gender or political positioning of the reader. Having established the ambiguity of the term this thesis will contend that it is specifically because of its imprecision and contradictions that it can be appropriately applied to the novelist and journalist Eliza Lynn Linton.

When searching for a pithy and apposite quotation to precede the title of this thesis I considered, and rejected, any number of extracts and allusions before deciding on the one that now proudly adorns the title page. Eliza Lynn Linton used the religious metaphor of "evenings in the Court of Paradise", with its sensual undertones, to describe the meetings of the scientific institutions, from which she as a woman was excluded; science being, on account of the ideology of separate spheres (which Linton endorsed) an inappropriate area for female participation, but one to which Linton nonetheless was anxious to have access – the phrase therefore combines religion,

⁵ Principally The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland, 3 Vols. (Hereafter Kirkland), The True History of Joshua Davidson (Hereafter Davidson) and "The Girl of the Period".

science and gender in a thoroughly ambiguous form, thus encapsulating the contradictions of the age and the paradox of the woman whose work reviews them. In addition, it demonstrates Linton's consummate skill for coining engaging epigrammatic phrases.⁶

⁶ Kirkland III. p. 83.

A Long Life and a Full One:
An account of the life and work of Eliza Lynn Linton.

“Sincerity of conviction and transparent honesty of purpose”.

Born in 1822, into that “incubator and hatchery for lady novelists”,¹ the nineteenth-century English parsonage, Elizabeth, known as Eliza, was the youngest child of the Rev. James Lynn of Crosthwaite, Keswick and his wife Charlotte Goodenough, daughter of the Bishop of Carlisle - who died five months after delivering Eliza - her twelfth child in seventeen years. Linton had, even by the standards of the day, an unconventional childhood, the Lynn children being left, “to the care of Providence” and their siblings, the elder charged with the supervision of the younger, resulting in “a disastrous system of tyranny”.² Linton felt the effects of this system particularly keenly, not only because she was the youngest but also because, both in looks and in temperament, she felt herself always out of place.

I, by the inherent defects of my character, as well as by my place as the youngest, suffered most. Quick to resent and sensitive to kindness, rebellious and affectionate, wilful and softhearted, I was ever in tumult and turmoil, followed by disgrace, punishment and repentance.

CK I. p. 48

In addition she was always unfavourably compared to her sister Lucy, who was eighteen months older and a world apart from the robust and boyish Eliza. Lucy, whom Linton adored, was everybody’s favourite. Linton later described her as a blue eyed, blonde-haired little maiden of the “Fra Angelico type”, who her brothers loved and protected, whereas they would “have kissed a hedgehog as soon as me”. It was Linton’s vision of Lucy that was later to provide the model for many of her fictional heroines.³ The Rev. Lynn, in common with most men of his time, was of the opinion that education for women was neither necessary nor desirable. In consequence she received no formal education, a lack that she deeply regretted and that she felt always held her back in her

¹ Vineta Colby, The Singular Anomaly, New York University Press, New York. 1970. p. 15.

² Kirkland I. p. 46.

³ Linton, “A Retrospect” Fortnightly Review, Nov. 1885. p. 618. Kirkland I. p. 57. In Kirkland Linton’s sister Lucy is transposed into brother Edwin. Nancy Anderson in Woman against Women contends that Linton’s childhood relationship with Lucy was both complex and ambiguous and that Linton’s devotion was tempered by jealousy, resentment and a strong erotic attachment. pp. 11-14.

career. Nevertheless, she proved to be a precocious, not to mention difficult, child. She read extensively in history, philosophy, classical and modern literature and by the time she was seventeen had taught herself, with the aid of her father's library, French, German, Spanish and Italian and had accrued a working knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew - she read Ovid and Plato and argued so fiercely with her father over theological, social and political issues, that on at least one occasion he knocked her to the ground for her "republican impertinence".⁴ It was during her mid-teenage years that her eclectic reading, together with a naturally enquiring mind and iconoclastic disposition, began to sow the seeds of the religious scepticism that was to become central to her personal credo and which she was to interrogate, and advocate, in much of her later work.

Clearly, the life of a dutiful clergyman's daughter in the confines of rural Cumberland was not one to which she could reconcile herself. Charming as the town of Keswick is, and the beauty of its location is indisputable, it remains even now rather remote; it would have seemed doubly so to the young Eliza Lynn whose feelings of loneliness, "isolated in the family, so out of harmony with them all", were already intense.⁵

When Linton was aged nine the family had moved to Gadshill Place, near Rochester in Kent, and while by no means a teeming metropolis, life at Gadshill afforded much more amusement than could be had in the Lake District, and more than fifty years later Linton wrote engagingly of her time there.⁶ After five years the family returned to Crosthwaite, which in comparison would have seemed more isolated than ever. In Christopher Kirkland Linton calls Keswick "Eden", and she often wrote evocatively and fondly of the beauty of the area, but she was nevertheless eager to leave behind the constrictions of such an insular society and it was at this time that she began to consider ways in which escape might be achieved.⁷

⁴ Kirkland I. p. 97.

⁵ *Ibid.* I. p. 60. The county of Cumberland, as it was known in Linton's time, is now called Cumbria.

⁶ Linton, "A Retrospect". Following the death of her father Linton sold Gadshill to Charles Dickens for £1790.

⁷ E.g. Linton, The Lake Country illustrated by W.J. Linton. Smith, Elder & Co. London. 1864.

The years following the family's return to Keswick were ones of profound intellectual and emotional upheaval for Linton. She passed through a time of intense Evangelical zeal in which, setting herself "secret penance for secret sins", she became a "moral hybrid, half ascetic, half stoic". She slept on the floor, deprived herself of all luxuries and taught herself to "bear mild torture without wincing", once digging out a tooth with a knife "as a good exercise in fortitude".⁸ This period came to an end in a instant of momentous revelation in which she experienced the sudden realisation that the Scriptures might not be the word of God; an epiphany that was to set her on an inexorable course toward Agnosticism. In addition, it was at this time, in her late teenage years, that she developed an intense and passionate association with a visitor to the area, an older married woman, known in Kirkland as Adeline Dalrymple. The relationship is described in terms of heightened emotion and sexual awakening and culminates in Linton experiencing a physical and possibly mental breakdown. By the time she had recovered the Dalrymples had left the area. Once returned to good health she became convinced that she was possessed of the "ability to conquer circumstances and compel happiness, no matter what the obstacles to be overcome. Heart-broken though I might be, I was still master of fate".⁹ Her fate, she was sure, was not to spend her life in a Cumberland vicarage.

In her feelings of frustration caused by the social and cultural limitations she felt were placed upon her and her yearning to break free she was of course not alone. But the vast majority of Victorian wives and daughters accepted dissatisfaction, preferring to "suffer and be still", rather than risk failure, penury and disgrace. Having considered the limited options available to her, Linton concluded that a literary career was the one that afforded the most opportunities and the greatest possibility of success. Writing, of course, was one of the few means of self-expression open to women in the mid nineteenth-century; it was an employment that could be undertaken at home and therefore without violating accepted codes of female domesticity. Writing from within the confines of the home, even if it was being undertaken for financial reasons, was at least partially legitimated because it could be fitted in with domestic duties and

⁸ Kirkland I. pp. 86, 84-85.

⁹ Ibid. I. p. 218. Given the era and Linton's class and gender this statement (notwithstanding the male persona) is quite extraordinary.

responsibilities. Linton, on the other hand, from the very first, saw writing as her means of escaping the restrictions of home and family and of achieving personal emancipation.

In 1845, having had enough published - mostly poems - to convince her that she had a literary future, she eventually succeeded in persuading her father, who thought no more of her literary ambitions than he did of her other beliefs, to agree to her spending a year in London, during which time she was sure she could establish herself as a writer. Rev. Lynn was violently opposed to the idea of her moving to London, and even worse, earning her living as a “a mere newspaper hack, a mere Grub Street poet”. He was not against literature *per se*, but considered the commercial press a disgraceful ambition for the granddaughter of Bishop Goodenough.

To write in the quiet dignity of home a learned book like Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, or a profound one like Locke On the Understanding, was one thing; to depend for bread on one's pen was another. The one shed increased lustre on the noblest name; the other was no better than fiddling in an orchestra, acting in a barn, or selling yards of silk across a counter, all of which were allied disreputabilities. It was a low class metier, let who would follow it: but for a gentleman and the grandson of a Bishop, it was a degradation. ... 'Do you think you can do no better for yourself than write poems for Warren's blacking, or scratch up Bow Street details for a dinner?'

CK I. pp. 224-225

Linton was equally determined that it was in literature that her future lay, though she saw her future primarily as a novelist, rather than as a newspaper writer, hack or otherwise. Invoking the example of one of her father's favourite authors (and simultaneously revealing the level of her own ambition) she replies that, “if to be a literary hack now is the way to literary fame hereafter, I will serve my apprenticeship as others have done. Sir Walter Scott was not a literary hack!”¹⁰ It was the timely intervention of the family's London solicitor, who promised to keep an eye on Linton whilst she was in the capital, that finally persuaded her father to give his consent (and an allowance of £30) and at the age of 23 she set out, “towards the promised land - the land where I was to find work, fame, liberty and happiness”.¹¹

¹⁰ Kirkland I. p. 225.

¹¹ Ibid. I, p. 237.

It may be cynical to suggest that the detail that the Rev. Lynn was about to remarry may have had some bearing on his eventual decision to allow his youngest daughter to leave home. Linton did not show the deference expected of a dutiful daughter toward her father and it is likely that she would have made life difficult for her father's new wife. The fact that she never referred to her father's remarriage or her new stepmother, who was also called Elizabeth, is indicative of the enmity that she felt toward the situation; even though it resulted in her realizing her initial goal, her sense of rejection would have been acute, one Elizabeth as it were, being replaced by another.

In all her work Linton drew heavily on personal detail, particularly from her early life; so much so that it is possible to suggest that virtually all of her novels are in some way autobiographical. The breakdown of family relations, the presence of a "black sheep" at odds with upbringing and social circumstances, the advent of a disruptive step-parent, the incidence of an unsympathetic, often hypocritical clergyman, and the conflicted presence of a fair, delicate and submissive Lucy-like heroine and her dark, strong, independent opposite, are all amongst the themes which occur repeatedly throughout her novels. An early work, Realities (1851) has the dark and passionate Clara, running away to London to become an actress after being replaced in her mother's affections by the golden-haired and submissive Alice. Patricia Kemball (1875) contrasts the eponymous heroine, auburn haired, vigorous and straightforward with the affected and exaggeratedly submissive, lisping Dora Drummond. Even Linton's choice of character name serves to reveal a personal identification with her, often anti-heroines. Lizzie Lorton of Greyrigg (1866), written as her own marriage was failing, is the story of a neglected child who grows up "panting for life and action", falls in love with her masculine ideal, only to have him marry her fair-haired and docile rival.

At the age of twenty-three Linton took lodgings in Montagu Place, close by the British Museum, in whose reading room she spent a year researching and writing her first novel, a historical romance, Azeth, the Egyptian (1847). Azeth was at the time favourably received and though she later conceded that the novel was virtually unreadable, she wrote engagingly of her delight on reading its review in The Times. Feeling as if she was "treading on air" she wanted to stop the passers-by in the street,

“to shake their hands and tell them it was I who had written the novel which the Times had reviewed so well”.¹²

Ainsworth's Magazine and the Metropolitan were taking her poems and short stories, her father was persuaded to allow her to stay away for another year and in 1848 she successfully applied for a post on the Morning Chronicle and so became the first woman journalist in England to draw a fixed salary. As the middle of the century approached the young Eliza Lynn was well on the way to achieving her ambition, although her second novel, Amymone: A Romance in the Days of Pericles (1848) a combination of melodrama, historical instruction and a discussion of women's rights, was not so well received as her first had been.

It was at this time she met the poet Walter Savage Landor, by then an elderly man, with whom she struck up an intense and lasting friendship. She was always his “dear daughter”, he always her “father”, Landor clearly filling the role of sympathetic parent and mentor that had heretofore been missing from her life. It has been suggested that Linton's friendship with Landor had mercenary undertones; his biographer, R.H. Super implied that Linton used her relationship with Landor to further her career, unkindly observing that, “their friendship was quickly profitable to her in a literary way”, though there is no evidence to indicate that either of them was less than delighted with each other.¹³ It is certainly true that Landor was most supportive of Linton's work, enthusiastically recommending it in reviews, and publishing poems on the subject of, or dedicated to Miss Eliza Lynn. She in turn was equally supportive of him, and during his years of exile in Italy acted on his behalf, attempting to persuade editors to accept his work. Landor's letters to his “dear daughter” were always loving, and for her part Linton was to refer to him only in the most affectionate of tones, both in private and in public, for the rest of her life.¹⁴

It was at the home of Walter Savage Landor that Linton met and fell in love with Dr. Edward Deane MacDermot, with whom, “though circumstances made their union

¹² Ibid. I. p. 258.

¹³ R.H. Super, “Landor's ‘Dear Daughter’, Eliza Lynn Linton” PMLA, Dec. 1944. p. 1060.

¹⁴ Layard, pp. 110-124.

impossible”, she maintained a correspondence until her death.¹⁵ The breakdown of this relationship - he was a Roman Catholic and would not marry the agnostic Linton without his church’s consent, she would not profess a belief she did not hold, nor accept the church’s right to make such a demand - was to have an effect in her later treatment of Roman Catholics and would help colour her attitude toward all religious authority.

Linton was at this time part of London’s small and intimate literary circle, her catalogue of friends and acquaintances was impressive and included Marian Evans, not yet George Eliot, who reported to a friend, Cara Hennell, that at their first meeting Miss Lynn had told her, “she was never so attracted to a woman before as to me”, because I am, “such a lovable person”.¹⁶ Eliot’s biographer Gordon Haight speculates on Eliot’s wondering how she was to earn a living; “Could she earn her living as a writer?...Eliza Lynn, who was not half so clever, had already published two novels”, adding that it was this first meeting with Linton that determined Eliot to try her hand as a novelist: “her mind was made up. If Eliza Lynn could write books, so could she. She would live in London and earn her living by the pen”.¹⁷ Linton’s later recollection of that first meeting was not quite the same.

Confession is good for the soul, they say; and I will candidly confess my short-sighted prejudices with respect to this - to be - celebrated person...She was essentially under-bred and provincial; and I, in the swaddling clothes of early education and possession as I was, saw more of the provincial than the genius, and was repelled by the unformed manner rather than attracted by the learning. She held her hands and arms kangaroo fashion; was badly dressed; had an unwashed, unbrushed, unkempt look altogether; and she assumed a tone of superiority over me which I was not then aware was warranted by her undoubted leadership. From first to last she put up my mental bristles so that I rejected then and there what might have become a close acquaintance had I not been so blind, and so much influenced by her want of conventional graces.

MLL pp. 94-95

In later years Linton would grudgingly admit Eliot’s literary ability, but never lost her antipathy toward her or to her partner George Lewes, hinting at possession of a dark secret about their relationship that she declined to reveal. Linton was shocked and not a

¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 74-75.

¹⁶ Gordon Haight, George Eliot: A Biography, Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1968. p. 71

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 81.

little disturbed by Lewes. He was, she said “the most audacious man of her acquaintance and the most extreme”. His conversation “transgressed the bounds of propriety”, his over familiarity with female acquaintances (although not apparently with her personally) “upset her moral arithmetic”, and, she observed darkly, “his way of shaking hands suggested the Divorce Court”.¹⁸ Lewes reviewed Amymone for the Leader and though he had previously praised Linton’s “glowing rhetoric and daring utterance”, he offered the advice that that she should, “quit those remote regions of the antique world...[for] the thronging forms of modern life”.¹⁹

Taking Lewes’ advice, Linton gave her third novel, Realities, a contemporary setting, but it was not enough to ensure its success and she was dismayed by the hostile reception and the accusations of immorality that it received. The critics, at best, thought it unrealistic. Realities’ heroine, Clara de Saumarez, rejects her family’s conservative values, runs away to London, becomes an actress and is seduced by her stage manager, is “saved” by a clergyman whose offer of marriage she rejects because she cannot be the submissive wife that he desires. On discovering that she is in fact the illegitimate child of a family servant and her real mother had migrated to Australia, she contemplates suicide, but is rescued by a socialist freethinker whom she then marries, continuing her stage career in order to support them both.²⁰ Large portions of the text are taken up by

¹⁸Linton, My Literary Life, Hodder & Stoughton, London. 1899. pp. 18-21.

¹⁹ George Henry Lewes, “A Gentle Hint to Writing Women” Leader, May 18 1850. p. 189. Review of Amymone, Leader, Sept. 21, 1850. p. 616. in Nancy Fix Anderson, Woman against Women in Victorian England: A Life of Eliza Lynn Linton, Indiana University Press, Bloomington. 1987. p. 56. (Hereafter, Anderson, Woman against Women)

²⁰ John Chapman, who had originally agreed to publish Realities, changed his mind when he read the manuscript. He visited Linton with George Eliot and tried in vain to persuade her to “cancel some objectionable passages” which he said, “excited the sensual nature and were therefore injurious;” Gordon Haight, George Eliot and John Chapman, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1940. p. 130-131. This visit may also have coloured Linton’s attitude toward Eliot, though Eliot’s sentiment that “if Eliza Lynn could do it, so could she” suggests that, at least at the beginning of their respective careers, it was Eliot who looked enviously at Linton’s achievements. Geraldine Jewsbury told Jane Carlyle Realities was “clever” but was in such bad taste as to make her feel “trailed in the mud”. Selections from the Letters of Geraldine Endor Jewsbury to Jane Welsh Carlyle, Mrs. Alexander Ireland (ed.) Longmans, Green & Co., London. 1892. p. 405. The plot of Realities in a number of respects bears a striking resemblance to that of Jewsbury’s Half Sisters (1848), although Linton took events much further than Jewsbury, this may also have had a bearing on her judgment.

perorations on the class system, women's rights, prostitution and the legal system.

Realities was, as Andrea Broomfield notes, "set up for failure".²¹

In addition to her disappointment over Realities, Linton's relationship with MacDermot was foundering and she had ceased to work for the Morning Chronicle. It was therefore with little regret that in 1852 she left England for Europe. After travelling widely on the continent she settled in Paris as that city's correspondent for the Leader, maintaining herself by that and occasional articles and short stories for other English periodicals, including Dickens' Household Words, before returning to England in early 1854 to care for her dying father.²² It was to be fourteen years before she published her next novel.

While back in the Lake District Linton became acquainted with William James Linton and his unconventional family, who were then living at Brantwood House on Coniston Water.²³ William Linton, a talented engraver, writer and political radical, had founded a number of short-lived radical journals, including The English Republic (1851-1855) for which the then Eliza Lynn wrote several articles, including an essay on Mary Wollstonecraft in which she praised A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) as "one of the boldest and bravest things ever written" and Wollstonecraft herself as "a woman of strength, will, intellect and courage...None stronger, more independent, or more noble...one of the first, as she was one of the ablest defenders of the Rights of Woman".²⁴ The presence of this article, together with the sentiments expressed in Amymone and Realities appear to suggest that in the early years at least, Linton was a keen supporter of women's rights. However, it should be borne in mind that at the same time as her English Republic piece she was writing "The Rights and Wrongs of Woman" for Household Words in which, establishing a style, tone and platform that she

²¹ Andrea Broomfield, "Blending Journalism with Fiction: Eliza Lynn Linton and Her Rise to Fame as a Popular Novelist" in The Rebel of the Family: Eliza Lynn Linton, Deborah T. Meem (ed.) Broadview Press, Peterborough, Ontario. 2002. p. 448.

²² This duty fell to her as the only un-married daughter, her stepmother having died previously

²³ William Linton's second wife Emily was the sister of his first wife Laura who had died of consumption (1838) only six months after their marriage. There is some doubt over whether a ceremony was ever performed, if it was it would have to have taken place abroad as there were legal sanctions against widowers marrying their dead wife's sisters (incest through affinity, Lyndhurst Act 1835). William Linton subsequently sold Brantwood to John Ruskin (1871) who renovated the much-dilapidated house and grounds. Brantwood now belongs to the Ruskin Trust and the house and gardens are open to the public.

²⁴ Linton, "Mary Wollstonecraft" The English Republic, Vol. 4. 1854. p. 422, 418.

was later to utilise in The Saturday Review, she recommended women to, “Find your happiness in love, in quiet, in home activity and in natural duties; turn as from your ruin from all those glaring images of honour which a weak ambition places before you”.²⁵ It seems likely that Linton’s undoubted admiration for Mary Wollstonecraft was largely rooted, not in her political stance, but the circumstances of her life, which as Linton describes them, closely resemble her own.²⁶

William Linton’s wife Emily was in poor health, and following the death of James Lynn in February 1855, Eliza assumed the care of William’s family. Emily died soon after giving birth to a girl, who was named Eliza; her namesake promised the dying woman that she would continue to look after the family and in 1858 the thirty-six year old Eliza Lynn married the twice-widowed forty-six year old father of seven William James Linton. Declining to give up her own name on marriage she became Eliza Lynn Linton, and the law of *femme covert* still being in place, had a prenuptial agreement drawn in order to protect her personal income and property.

William Linton’s domestic arrangements were chaotic and in a number of respects were reminiscent of Linton’s own childhood circumstances, and while there is no doubt that Linton had a great (theoretical) admiration for William’s principled radicalism, she saw the marriage as an act of altruism, in which she brought order and discipline to what would now be described as a severely dysfunctional family. Her father had died three years earlier, Landor was out of the country and her relationship with MacDermot was irrevocably over. Feeling a sense of emptiness in her life, she hoped that marriage to William Linton and the care of his family would fill the void.

They clung to me like children, and I was glad to put all my resources at their disposal. Strength and energy – time and money – I poured all into their hands, and thought nothing lost that gained them ease. I was deeply interested in them. They fascinated me by their very strangeness...feeling myself to be of use to

²⁵ Linton, “The Rights and Wrongs of Woman” Household Words, April 1 1854. pp. 160-161.

²⁶ Linton’s consideration of Wollstonecraft is primarily concerned with her life, rather than her work, and it is hard not to draw parallels between them. Both had inconsistent and sometimes violent fathers, Wollstonecraft’s mother was unfeeling, Linton’s absent, both had intense relationships with a female friend, both were self-educated, leaving home at an early age to be self-supporting, and both were abandoned by their one true love, MacDermot in Linton’s case (though this post-dated Linton’s article) and Imlay in Wollstonecraft’s.

them seemed to compensate me for the loss [of MacDermot] whom creed – and Christ – had taken from me.

CK III. pp. 27-28

But it was doomed from the very beginning. She did not live up to William's radical ideal, proscribing his political activities and insisting that the family move to London so that she could rebuild her literary connections. He in turn was a profligate whose idealism soon became a source of irritation to her. He mocked what he saw as her middle-class and literary pretensions and not only continued his political activism but invited a Polish refugee to come and live with them. She was anxious to put the family on a secure financial footing; he could not understand the need for financial order, preferring to leave such things to providence. She was naturally combative, pathologically neat, and had lived independently for thirteen years. He exasperated her by his passive resistance and disorderly habits. Their incompatibility was not only philosophical. Physically William was not a man to "satisfy her taste", and his biographer, F.B. Smith, suggests that their marriage was never consummated.²⁷ In short it was a disaster and began to fall apart even before it had begun, "before I had been married two months, I asked myself the question: 'How long will this last?'"²⁸ They were soon living virtually separate lives, although Linton continued to support the family financially, and for several years joined the family at Brantwood for the summer. In 1866 William Linton moved to America where he was a great deal more successful than he had been in Britain, and from where he published his autobiography, Threescore and Ten Years (1894) in which there is not even a passing mention of Eliza Lynn Linton, to whom, despite their separation, he had remained married for almost forty years.²⁹

During the years in which she had lived with her husband Linton's literary career had not flourished. She was still writing articles and short stories, though not on the same scale as previously, and it was not until the marriage was virtually over that she published Grasp Your Nettle (1865) her first novel since Realities fourteen years

²⁷ Kirkland III. p. 32. F. B. Smith, Radical Artisan: William James Linton, 1812-97, Manchester University Press, Manchester. 1973. p. 35.

²⁸ Ibid. III. p. 35.

²⁹ William J. Linton Threescore and Ten Years, 1820-1890: Recollections, C. Scribner & Sons, New York. 1894.

before.³⁰ A series of articles for Household Words and the National Magazine written shortly before her marriage were published as an anthology Witch Stories (1861). This and The Lake Country (1864), the only work on which Linton and her husband collaborated, were among her chief works of this period. Witch Stories in particular was concerned with the often conflicting issues of science and religion, concerns with which she was to engage in a number of her later works.

It must have become plain to Linton comparatively early on in her career that she was never going to become a “great novelist”, especially as her advent upon the literary scene happened at a time when there was a great deal of serious competition, as well as many less distinguished literary rivals, and the fact that she became well known as a novelist at all is testimony to her skill, industry and determination. It has been estimated that around 3,500 (mostly forgotten) novelists between them produced approximately 50,000 (mostly forgotten) novels during the Victorian era, with by far the majority appearing in the last quarter of the century. Statistical analysis, as John Sutherland notes, “does not take literary criticism very far”, but it does serve to put into context Linton’s position as a producer of fiction. With the greater part of Victorian fiction writers now unknown and the mass of their work lost, Sutherland’s observation, that the “condition of the Victorian novelist is obscurity”, that to be known at all is “exceptional”, and to be famous is “to be a very rare bird indeed” is a trenchant one.³¹ Linton’s first novel was published in 1847, the same year as Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights. Mary Barton and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall came the following year. Chronologically she was also publishing in competition with Mrs. Henry Wood, Margaret Oliphant and Charlotte Yonge, as well as her archrival George Eliot. While there is always room for another good novel, Linton did not achieve either the critical or commercial success of her better-known rivals. Nevertheless she was, and despite (or perhaps because of) the notoriety of some of her work, remained, a “popular” novelist.

³⁰ Layard (pp. 125-126) notes that Linton’s marriage and domestic cares had a ‘disastrous’ affect on her literary work, her output going from 97 articles in 1859 to a ‘beggarly’ 9 in 1863. This not only affected her financially, it also indicates that, potentially much more damaging, she was losing touch with the editors for whom she had been regularly working.

³¹ John Sutherland’s foreword, “The Underread” in The New Nineteenth Century: Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction, Barbara Leah Harman and Susan Meyer (eds.) Garland, New York. 1996. p. xxv, xiv. Sutherland’s fascinating quantitative analysis of Victorian fiction is also a mine of intriguing snippets of information; e.g. the Trollope dynasty accounted for 170 novels, 0.3 percent of the output for the entire period. pp. xvi-xvii.

In 1866, under the editorship of John Douglas Cook, for whom she had worked on the Morning Chronicle, Linton began writing the fiercely critical articles for the Saturday Review for which she is best known. Her pieces for the Saturday were focussed on the position of women in society; the “Advanced Women” who sought political advancement, social equality or economic independence came under Linton’s unflattering scrutiny, as did any woman who defied her notion of modest good taste or who eschewed woman’s natural biological functions of marriage and maternity.

For the first time Linton was experiencing real (albeit largely anonymous) literary success, a success that was consolidated in 1868 by the publication of her most notorious essay, “The Girl of the Period”, a piece that secured her reputation as a commentator on the woman question and consolidated her position as a pre-eminent independent journalist. In addition, two more novels, Lizzie Lorton of Greyrigg (1866), and Sowing the Wind (1867), which has a female journalist as a central character, soon followed; as well as two collected editions, Modern Women and What is Said of Them: A Reprint of the Series of Articles in the Saturday Review (1868) which was published in America, and Ourselves: Essays on Women (1869) a collection of essays that had previously appeared in Routledge’s Magazine. Happiness is hard to establish and may still have been proving elusive, but three of her four ambitions, “work, fame and liberty” had certainly been achieved.

The reception that “The Girl of the Period”, and other essays written in the same vein received, demonstrated that she had hit on a winning formula. Critics in the Saturday were known as “Saturday Revilers”, and Cook maintained a deliberate policy of setting, “women against women to see who would make the best fight of it”. As she had already demonstrated Eliza Lynn Linton was not one to shy away from a fight.³² “The Girl of the Period” caused such a furore that, in the best tradition of popular journalism, it would “run and run”, and Linton went on to write two long woman question pieces for

³² Merle Mowbray Bevington, The Saturday Review: 1858-1868 Columbia University Press, New York. 1941. p. 44. Clement Scott, The Drama of Yesterday and Today, Macmillan, London. 1899. Vol.1. p. 422, in Anderson, Woman against Women, p. 119.

the Saturday every month for the next ten years.³³ Calling into question the integrity of English girlhood, Linton's article prompted intense public debate, producing "one of those fine outbursts of virtuous indignation of which we, as a people, are so unreasonably proud".³⁴ It was reprinted in pamphlet form, with its author acknowledged, in the same year as its original publication (1868) and also published in America, as the first essay in Modern Women and What Is Said of Them, where it was the subject of much discussion in the New York Times.³⁵ The magazine Victoria even reported that the essay had reached India and been translated into Hindi. The extraordinary success of the article gave rise to a great number and variety of offshoots, including at least two extremely successful, albeit short-lived, magazines, The Girl of the Period Miscellany and The Girl of the Period Almanac, and a songbook, The Girl of the Period Songster. There was a "wife of the period", a "schoolgirl of the period", "poetry of the period", a "cigar of the period" and even the "muttonchop of the period" (although whether this was a style of men's whiskers or a lamb cutlet is not clear). The satirical magazines Punch and Tomahawk carried sketches, articles and cartoons lampooning the character and activities of Girl of the Period herself as well as those of her imagined creator.³⁶ The Queen commented that they hoped "men and women of the coming period will not look upon this [Girl of the Period] Miscellany as a true portraiture of our time", adding that it trusted none "but the very shallow-brained" would emulate the model depicted by such magazines.³⁷

In focussing on women's social and cultural position, an issue that was engaging public debate, Linton was simultaneously ensuring that it remained in the centre of the public arena and securing her own status as a primary correspondent on the subject. "The Girl of the Period" established Linton's reputation as a critic of women so successfully that it was a role that she continued to maintain for the next thirty years; though it was not one that occupied her to the exclusion of all other subjects. The changing, often conflicting,

³³ Many of these pieces were later collected and published by Bentleys in 2 Vols. The Girl of the Period and other Social Essays (1883). (Hereafter, Social Essays.)

³⁴ Layard, p. 144.

³⁵ Modern Women and What is Said of Them: A Reprint of the Series of Articles in the Saturday Review, J.S. Redfield, New York. 1868.

³⁶ See Elizabeth K. Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets & William Veeder (eds.) The Woman Question: Society and Literature in Britain and America 1837-1883. Vol. 1. "Defining Voices", University of Chicago Press, Chicago. 1983. pp. 112-125. Bevington, p. 112.

³⁷ "Serials for October," The Queen, Oct. 16 1869. pp. 222-223.

roles of religion and science were also engaging Victorian thought and Linton's work provides a significant register of the concerns and anxieties that these issues also prompted in the minds of her contemporaries. Linton's rejection of religion and her concomitant faith in science as the means of achieving both moral and material advance was not always as overtly stated in her writing as her views on the "woman question". Nevertheless she also offers a salient and often thoughtful engagement with religious and scientific debate that provides a valuable insight into the pressures that undermined cultural certainty.

In 1872 Linton published what was probably the most controversial, and commercially successful, of all her fiction, The True History of Joshua Davidson, Christian and Communist, in which for the first time Linton began openly to interrogate her own loss of religious belief through the medium of her fiction. A forceful and heart-felt attack on political and religious orthodoxy, Joshua Davidson was at first published anonymously, but in 1874, when it went to its sixth edition, Linton's authorship was acknowledged. Davidson remained in print for almost fifty years and was reissued in 1976 as part of the Garland series "Novels of Faith and Doubt".

While still writing for the periodical press Linton was also occupied on a series of novels. In 1875 she published Patricia Kemball.³⁸ This was quickly followed by The Atonement of Leam Dundas (1876), The World Well Lost (1877), Under Which Lord? (1879), The Rebel of the Family (1880), My Love (1881) and Ione Stewart (1883). In addition there were two collections of short stories, The Mad Willoughbys and Other Tales (1875) and With a Silken Thread, and Other Stories (1880), as well as her collected Saturday Review essays in The Girl of the Period, and other Social Essays (1883). The sheer quantity of the work is formidable; particularly as all the novels were in three volumes (except The World Well Lost which was in two) and all the more remarkable in that Linton was not living in England at the time and much of her work was undertaken while travelling. The years 1876 to 1879 were spent touring Italy with

³⁸ During 1874, whilst writing Patricia Kemball Linton also published 86 articles in 7 different periodicals. Layard, p. 186. This novel includes the person of Jabez Hamley, probably the most odious of Linton's many repellent male characters. Hamley thinks it as natural for women to lie as it was for "canaries to sing" and liked women "who screamed easily". Patricia Kemball, p. 48.

Beatrice Sichel, the daughter of a family friend, and aside from sometimes extended visits with friends, Linton continued to live in Italy, not returning permanently to England until 1884, when she moved to an apartment in Queen Anne's Mansions, where she was to live for the next eleven years.

There followed a period in which, while still producing novels and writing for various magazines and journals Linton also published The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland (1885), which, despite its title is the autobiography of Linton herself.

Published by Richard Bentley, Linton's authorship is clearly proclaimed on the title page. It was the first book Bentley published on a royalty basis and he had good reason to regret the decision.³⁹ George Somes Layard, Linton's literary executor and first biographer, identified the reason for Kirkland's spectacular lack of success as Linton's idea, "conceived in an unfortunate moment", of reversing her own sex and that of many of her characters, "for their better disguise". He says, "to those who could read between the lines the effect was somewhat bizarre, while to those not in the secret the story was in parts incomprehensible".⁴⁰ Whether ill conceived or not Linton's strategy makes a reading of The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland rather more challenging than is usual in books of the genre. Nevertheless, the contradictions and complexities offered by her cross-gendered protagonist present a valuable means of access, not only to the public and private persona of the writer as an individual but also to the tensions and ambiguities of the society in which she lived.

In the same year as Kirkland Linton published a novel, Stabbed in the Dark (1885) a melodramatic tale of adultery, illegitimacy, murder and confinement, centred on an over-protected, naïve and therefore vulnerable, Italian noblewoman. Much of Linton's writing continued to be taken up with prescribing women's position and role in society and with every advance in women's rights or modification in what she considered appropriate female behaviour, Linton's condemnation of her *Girl of the Period*'s more

³⁹ Linton received an advance of £250 and a promise of 5 shillings for every copy over 1000 that was sold. It was priced at 31 shillings and sixpence a set and Bentley spent £173, 6 shillings and 3 pence on advertising. The first edition sold 648 copies. When she urged him to offer a cheap single volume edition Bentley gave her the copyright back and invited her to do what she liked with it. Royal A. Gettmann, A Victorian Publisher: A Study of the Bentley Papers, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1960. pp. 116, 126.

⁴⁰ Layard, preface, p. vii.

mature sister, the New Woman, became more voluble; although by no means all of her writing was focussed on the “woman question”. The Fortnightly Review published an article, “Pasteur’s Life and Labours”, in which Linton, under the guise of a book review, expounded her often expressed, though much less acknowledged, views on science and religion.⁴¹ It was Linton’s contention that the advancement of science would eventually drive out society’s reliance on religion as a cultural necessity, the advent of which she looked forward to with confidence and advocated with enthusiasm. This article drew the attention of Prime Minister Gladstone who, in an essay in the Nineteenth Century, took Linton to task both for her defence of evolutionary theory and for her unashamed religious scepticism.⁴² Linton’s response, “A Protest and a Plea”, a hitherto much neglected document, was included, with others also reacting to Gladstone’s essay, in The Order of Creation: The Conflict between Genesis and Geology (1886).⁴³ The significance of “A Protest and a Plea” is discussed in the later “Science” section (below).

While still continuing to publish articles focussed on what constituted women’s role in society, such as “Woman’s Place in Nature and Society” for the Belgravia magazine, during her ‘Italian years’ Linton’s didacticism was largely confined to her fiction, although her next two novels, Paston Carew, Millionaire and Miser (1886) and Through the Long Night (1889) attracted little attention.⁴⁴

However, Linton’s return to London in 1885 was accompanied by a stepping up of her condemnation of any shift that allowed women a role outside of their “natural place” within the home and family. In fact Linton’s early anti-feminist journalism was a model of restraint when compared to some of her later pieces, which became more and more fervent in tone as she got older and she saw many of the things slipping away, which, for her, represented the ideal. In articles written for the National Review and the Fortnightly Review she habitually expressed her disapproval of members of either sex who stepped out of the roles that she prescribed for them: giving the vote to women she

⁴¹ Linton, “Pasteur’s Life and Labours” Fortnightly Review, Vol. 38. August 1885.

⁴² Hon. W. E. Gladstone, “The Dawn of Creation and of Worship” Nineteenth Century, Nov. 1885.

⁴³ Hon. W. E. Gladstone, Prof. T. H. Huxley, Prof. Max Müller, M. Réville and E. Lynn Linton, The Order of Creation: The Conflict between Genesis and Geology, The Truthseeker Co., New York, 1886.

⁴⁴ Linton, “Woman’s Place in Nature and Society” Belgravia, May 1876.

argued, would create the mannish women and the feminised men who would reverse the civilizing influence that the proper function of the sexes had on society.

Although among the most outspoken of opponents of the movement for women's rights Linton was not alone in her opinion and in 1889 her name was only one of many hundreds appended to "An Appeal against Female Suffrage" published in the Nineteenth Century. Among the points that the petition made was the suggestion that the political access already available to women, on School Boards and Boards of Guardians for instance, where their influence, still rooted in the domestic, could be "useful", was as far as political concessions should go. "When it comes to questions of foreign or colonial policy, or of grave constitutional changes, then we maintain that the necessary and normal experience of women...does not and can never provide them with such materials for sound judgement as are open to men".⁴⁵ In other articles Linton took the argument further; give women political power, she said, and society will degenerate, becoming "disorganised, undisciplined, individualised and [fall] to pieces".⁴⁶ England will cease to be masculine; its strong, self-governing and vigorous character will become French. In Linton's mind France was a feminised nation, morally and physically weak, uncertain and dependent.⁴⁷ The "masculinity" of England, under threat from deviant political and cultural forces, was a theme that emerged in much of Linton's work, the explicit admonitions of her journalism then becoming individualised in the personalities and situations of her fiction.

In 1888 Linton met Beatrice Harraden, a graduate of London University and a keen supporter of women's rights, Harraden represented everything that was anathema to her, but despite their opposing opinions, their conversations were sometimes "decidedly stormy", and the great disparity in their ages (Linton was sixty-six, Harraden twenty-four) they struck up a friendship that was to be both sincere and gratifying. Linton encouraged Harraden in her writing, urging her to, "hitch *your* wagon to the stars, and

⁴⁵ Linton, et al. "An Appeal against Female Suffrage" Nineteenth Century, June 1889, in Before the Vote was Won, Jane Lewis (ed.) Routledge & Kegan Paul, London. 1987. p. 410.

⁴⁶ Linton, "The Characteristics of English Women: II." Fortnightly Review, March 1889. p. 376.

⁴⁷ Linton, "The Characteristics of English Women: I." Fortnightly Review, Feb. 1889. pp. 345-360: "The Future Supremacy of Women" National Review, Sept. 1886. pp. 1-15: "The Threatened Abdication of Man" National Review, July 1889. pp. 572-592.

hey! For the top of the tree!...Go on, go on, go on". While Harraden, winning a place in Linton's affections once held by Beatrice Sichel, lifted Linton's spirits and renewed her vitality.⁴⁸

In the last years of her life, much of Linton's work, both fiction and non-fiction, was dedicated to the wholesale condemnation of the New Woman. Through such articles as the "Wild Women" series that appeared in the Nineteenth Century from May 1891 to November 1892, she kept herself at the forefront of feminist debate.⁴⁹ A position that was reinforced by the publication of The One Too Many (1894) and In Haste and at Leisure (1895), both of which were fiercely antagonistic toward advanced women. Dulcie Everton followed these in 1896.

Women's issues, however, did not absorb all of Linton's energies. A long-term supporter of Irish Home Rule, in 1889 Linton's newfound energy prompted her to travel to Ireland with the purpose of seeing for herself the conditions there. As a consequence she changed her opinion entirely, "leaving London a pronounced Radical and returning a Unionist".⁵⁰ Characteristically she felt compelled to make her opinions public, partly because she felt it her duty to tell the truth as she saw it, and partly to demonstrate, publicly and in print, that she had been mistaken and was prepared to admit her error. She "had the courage of her opinions, and when she was convinced of error made no hesitation in confessing"⁵¹ and About Ireland (1890) and About Ulster (1892) were the result. Her model for governing Ireland bears a striking resemblance to her paradigm for the ideal domestic regime, "Ireland ought to have a measure of self-government, such as we have in England: but Imperial Government must be one and indivisible".⁵²

⁴⁸ Beatrice Harraden, "Mrs. Lynn Linton" Bookman 8, September 1898. p. 17. Linton to Beatrice Harraden, Layard, p. 300. Layard gives a date, July 28, but no year, prob. 1890-91. Beatrice Harraden, author of the new woman novel Ships That Pass in the Night (1893) and graduate of London University, Harraden called Linton "Viking" and was in turn termed "little B. A."

⁴⁹ Linton, "The Wild Women: As Politicians" Nineteenth Century, July 1891. pp. 189-197: "The Wild Women: As Social Insurgents" Nineteenth Century, Oct. 1891. pp. 99-207: "Partisans of the Wild Women" Nineteenth Century, March 1892. pp. 455-464.

⁵⁰ Layard, p. 264.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 268.

⁵² Linton to Charles Voysey, Aug. 1889, Layard, p. 268. Rev. Charles Voysey, expelled from the Church of England in 1871 for expounding heretical doctrines, founder of the Theistic Church.

Having suffered from reoccurring bouts of bronchitis, exacerbated by polluted city air, in the autumn of 1895 Linton left London and settled in Malvern. Nevertheless, despite poor health her literary output remained extraordinary. In 1896, in addition to Dulcie Everton (admittedly in two volumes rather than her customary three) Layard records that she had 112 articles published and she continued her habitually prodigious level of correspondence, including a daily letter to her sister Lucy.⁵³ The following year a collection of her short stories was published, without her permission, under the title of T'wixt Cup and Lip (1897) and she was invited to contribute a section to Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign (1897). Her choice of subject was Elizabeth Gaskell, who had been kind to Linton at the beginning of her career, but Gaskell already being spoken for, Linton was assigned her old rival George Eliot. The result was a long essay that may not have entirely fulfilled the definition of "appreciation" as its publishers must have envisaged it; knowledge of Linton's antipathy toward Eliot adds piquancy to a reading of the piece.⁵⁴

If Linton is not regarded as amongst the foremost novelists of her day, her inclusion in important collections such as Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign and The Order of Creation nevertheless demonstrates that her opinions were taken seriously. An invitation to contribute her personal choice to "Fine Passages in Verse and Prose, Selected by Living Men of Letters", for the Fortnightly Review (1887) is an indication of the respect, both personal and professional, that she was afforded by late Victorian society.⁵⁵ (In addition, the article's title indicates that even late on in the century the journalist's voice continued to be male.) A commission to provide a number of articles on fellow novelists for Temple Bar, including "George Eliot" (1885), "The Novels of Balzac" (1886) and "Miss Broughton's Novels" (1887) indicates Linton's stature in literary society. As do "Anonymity?- I.& II." and "Candour in English Fiction" (1890)

⁵³ Layard, p. 318, 320.

⁵⁴ Linton, "George Eliot" in Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign: An Appreciation, by Mrs. Oliphant, Mrs. Lynn Linton, Mrs. Alexander, Mrs. Macquoid, Mrs. Parr, Mrs. Marshall, Charlotte M. Yonge, Adeline Sergeant & Edna Lyall, Hurst & Blackett, London. 1897. Even if it did not evince wholehearted approval the comprehensiveness of the essay cannot be faulted; Layard records that Linton reread all of Eliot's novels before she embarked on the project, Layard, p.326.

⁵⁵ "Fine Passages in Verse and Prose, Selected by Living Men of Letters" Fortnightly Review, August 1887. pp. 297-316. Among the other "men of letters" were Thomas Hardy and Matthew Arnold. Linton's choice included Shakespeare's Sonnet xxix. "When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes / I all alone beweep my outcast state".

for New Review which contributed respectively to symposia on the anonymity of periodical articles (she was for it) and censorship in fiction (she was against it).⁵⁶ An article on her appeared in Men and Women of the Day and in Woman at Home, hers is the first interview in Helen Black's Notable Women Writers of the Day (1893), Frederick Gould interviewed her for his Chats with Pioneers of Modern Thought (1894) as did Mrs Alec Tweedie for Temple Bar, and in 1897 she was invited to sit on the committee of the Society of Authors, the first woman to ever be accorded that honour.⁵⁷

At the beginning of 1898 Linton was working on a set of articles that W. Robertson Nichol had commissioned for Woman at Home. Although the series was not completed, those she had finished were collected and published posthumously as My Literary Life (1899). Another novel, also to be published posthumously, The Second Youth of Theodora Desanges (1899) was in production. In March she wrote engagingly to Layard, "Life is very lovely! I am so glad that I have that strain of mindless enjoyment in me that finds real pleasure in a flower, a ray of sunlight...the glory of a sunset...it is a low, mean, sensual, superficial kind of thing...All the same it is a valuable item in one's possession". Her indication in the same letter that she was "immensely interested" in the recent discovery of a tomb believed to that of Osiris, and was in the process of reading Burke's Vicissitudes of Families, indicates that even then not all her enjoyment was "mindless".⁵⁸ In May she was a guest of honour at the Society of Authors' annual dinner, where she "looked like the Queen of Sheba" and was escorted by the Bishop of London. The irony of a pronounced agnostic on the arm of a leading churchman did not escape her, although she commented that the Bishop "did not seem to think her a pariah".⁵⁹ A range of social and literary engagements were planned before her return to

⁵⁶ Linton, "George Eliot" Temple Bar, April 1885. pp. 512-524. "The Novels of Balzac" Temple Bar, Oct-Nov. 1886, pp. 197-212, 384-399, 495-509. "Miss Broughton's Novels" Temple Bar, June 1887. pp. 196-209. "Candour in English Fiction" New Review, Jan. 1890. pp. 10-14. "Anonymity? - I." New Review, Nov. 1889. "Anonymity? - II." New Review, Feb. 1890. In "Anonymity? - II." she said she favoured anonymity, although elsewhere she had claimed the contrary.

⁵⁷ Men and Women of the Day, n.d. (prob. Feb/ March, 1890) in Layard, pp. 272-273; Sarah Tooley in Woman at Home, Dec. 1897 in Anderson, Woman against Women, p. 209; Helen Black, Notable Women Writers of the Day, Bryce, Glasgow. 1893; F. J. Gould, Chats with Pioneers of Modern Thought, Watts & Co., London 1894: "A Chat with Mrs. Lynn Linton" Temple Bar, July 1894. pp. 355-364.

⁵⁸ Linton to Layard, March 4 1898, Layard, p. 360.

⁵⁹ Linton to Layard, May 9 1898, Layard, pp. 364-365.

Malvern but a chill quickly turned to another bout of the bronchitis and she died, aged seventy-six and after a literary career spanning more than fifty years, on July 14 1898.⁶⁰

Her death prompted a number of public eulogies, including one from the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne, who also told his sister that Linton was “one of the most brilliant and gifted...one of the kindest and most generous of women”, and from Walter Besant, whose poetic accolade was printed in the Queen.⁶¹

The key impetus to Beatrice Harraden’s appreciation in The Bookman was personal rather than literary, though she acknowledged that Linton was “essentially a woman of letters...flooded with the true literary feeling and instinct”, emphasising Linton’s standing as a journalist, rather than as a novelist.⁶² A number of commentators wrote warmly of Linton personally, though most held back from whole-heartedly praising her work. Her obituary in the Times concluded that, “Mrs Lynn Linton will probably be remembered as a remarkable example of those writers whose sensationalism of expression is more than half redeemed by their sincerity of conviction and transparent honesty of purpose”. The Academy, while pointing out that she had been praised by many of her contemporaries, added:

Mrs Linton had always something forceful and interesting to say, but an overriding suspicion of the unwomanly woman weakened much of her later work. For what she called the shrieking sisterhood Mrs Linton kept the best of her extraordinary powers of invective, and she pursued her bugbear with admirable if wearisome pertinacity as a writer.⁶³

Two years after Linton’s death her writing was damned by the faintest of faint praise in Fortnightly Review which published a retrospective of her life and work prompted by the publication of Layard’s Mrs. Lynn Linton: Her Life, Letters and Opinions.

Mrs. Lynn Linton possessed a vigorous dashing style; she worked

⁶⁰ The date of her death - Bastille Day – is curiously fitting for a woman whose life was committed to both the building up and the tearing down of the structures of social control.

⁶¹ Swinburne in Anderson, Woman against Women, p. 231. Walter Besant, “Tribute to Mrs. Lynn Linton” Queen, July 23, 1889. p. 135.

⁶² Harraden, p. 16.

⁶³ The Times, July 16 1898. Academy, July 23 1898, in Herbert van Thal, Eliza Lynn Linton: The Girl of the Period, George Allen & Unwin, London. 1979. pp. 227-228.

with a big brush and crude colours, and her powerful imagination enabled her to deal more or less successfully with violent incidents and exaggerated characters.⁶⁴

Linton's friend Sidney Low, a writer whom she much admired, wrote in the Pall Mall Gazette that he objected to seeing her "dismissed with reproach to the bottom of the literary class as one who was merely shallow and ignorant", adding that it is, after all, "some thing to have lived the literary life through half a century, strenuously, industriously, and with unflinching honesty; to have laboured without stint".⁶⁵

Even if immediate posterity could not admire, or agree, with much of what Eliza Lynn Linton said, it could at least manage an appreciation of her most "Victorian" of virtues; hard work, honesty, diligence and fortitude.

⁶⁴ George Paston, "A Censor of Modern Womanhood" Fortnightly Review, Sept. 1 1901. p. 511. George Paston was the pseudonym of New Woman novelist, playwright and biographer Emily Morse Symonds (1860-1936).

⁶⁵ Anderson, Woman against Women, p. 231.

The Woman Question

“countercurrents and treacherous undertows”

Eliza Lynn Linton's life and career were virtually contemporaneous with the life and reign of Queen Victoria, a sovereign whose name has come to represent any number of seemingly contradictory values and beliefs, all of which may be referred to as Victorian. Many would now see the years 1837 -1901 as representing Britain's greatest age, one that witnessed the consolidation of the British Empire and the export of British culture and civilization across the world, but for others is a shameful era of British history in which Britain set out systematically to violate the national and human rights of other peoples and nations for economic and territorial aggrandizement. For some the Victorian Age represents the rise of bureaucracy, the transference of power from individual to institution, in which individual autonomy and the freedom to order one's own life was subsumed to the mechanistic necessities of industrialization. It may embody the age in which England became the first modern nation, creating the industrial and social means of achieving national greatness, a symbol of the free-market economy - Social Darwinism at its simplest - survival of the fittest and the weak to the wall. For many, the term Victorian is synonymous with a less complicated, more moral age, in which, following the Queen's own example, the family unit represented both the heart and the foundation of society, or alternatively, an era that perpetuated the ideal of the family as a means of repression, disempowerment and confinement.

“Victorian” not only serves to encompass that time-span and the events of those years but is also used as an epithet to describe any number of vague and often contradictory values that are ascribed to the era. Because the term is so open to multiple definitions, especially when applied to the vague and shifting notion of cultural values, it can be employed equally as a means of expressing congratulation, approbation, nostalgia or desirability, of conveying respectability, decency, honour and virtue, or of denoting hypocrisy, duplicity, poverty and squalor. The time-span alone impedes consistency, the enormous changes in communication, demography, religious life, scientific knowledge and industrial infrastructure that were a feature of the age mean that the social and political structure of England in 1837 in many ways bore little resemblance to that of

1901. Perhaps the only thing that can be agreed between historians, social critics or the interested observer, is that the Victorian age was one of rapid social, scientific and political change, change which in turn challenged previously held beliefs, giving rise to ideological doubts and anxieties which were then communicated through the literature of the age. No more so than in the work of Eliza Lynn Linton, whose fiction and non-fiction both confronted and informed many of the major anxieties of her time

Having argued for the ambiguity of the term, it may then seem perverse to describe Eliza Lynn Linton as an archetypal Victorian. Nevertheless, an examination of her life and work reveals her, as Vineta Colby observed, “as a sound and faithful register”, who “consistently mirrored the inconsistencies of her time”.¹ As the first subject of Colby’s assembly of women writers Linton is indeed a “singular anomaly”. Virtually lost for almost a century, it is only in recent years that Eliza Lynn Linton has begun to attract critical attention, having hitherto, despite Colby’s own text, being regarded as “merely a curiosity”.² To dismiss Linton as simply “a curiosity” is to do her a great disservice. Through her work, and the account of her life that winds inextricably through all her writing, we are offered an invaluable insight into the heart of the contradictory and often anguished paradox that constitutes the Victorian psyche.

I. Establishing – and Challenging the Ideal

Queen Victoria, herself a firm proponent of the notion of separate spheres, “God created men and women different – then let them remain each in their own position”, was a vociferous opponent of the women’s movement and the “mad, wicked folly of ‘Women’s Rights,’ with all its attendant horrors, on which her poor feeble sex is bent”.³ She regarded her own situation as anomalous; a member of the “poor feeble sex”, yet ruler and supreme head of a quarter of the globe, telling her Uncle, King Leopold of the

¹ Vineta Colby, The Singular Anomaly: Women Novelists of the Nineteenth Century, New York University Press, New York. 1970. p. 22, 42.

² Vineta Colby, review of Nancy Fix Anderson’s, Woman against Women in Victorian England, in Nineteenth-Century Literature Vol. 43, No. 3, Dec. 1988. p. 411.

³ Queen Victoria to Sir Theodore Martin, May 29, 1870. Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1981.

Belgians “we women...are not fitted to reign”.⁴ All the same, her statement recalls that of an illustrious predecessor, Queen Elizabeth I, another monarch whose name came to symbolise an age of nationalistic power and enterprise. Elizabeth’s claim to have the “the body of a weak and feeble woman” was followed by the caveat, “but I have the heart and stomach of a king”, and therein lies the rub: it is one thing to protest one’s unfitness for status and power from an unassailable position and quite another to do so from a position precariously won and tenaciously maintained in open society.⁵ Yet this was the position that Linton managed to achieve and uphold throughout a long and eventful life and career.

Often contradictory, seemingly hypocritical and apparently blind to the inconsistencies of her own position, she condemned women for pursuing the independence that she herself enjoyed, consistently exhorting them to be happy and content with their domestic and matrimonial duties, whilst remaining unwilling, or unable, to adopt those roles herself. A contemporary, George Paston commented on the paradox of Linton’s conducting a “vigorous campaign against such of her sisters as were following the example of industry and independence that she herself had set them”.⁶ (Despite Paston’s antagonism it is likely that given the opportunity Linton would have taken a keen interest in her work, which included two novels; A Modern Amazon (1894) which explores the theme of celibate marriage, and A Writer of Books (1898), which deals with a young self-possessed woman writer moving to and living in London.)

Linton’s own brand of anti-feminism was nothing if not eclectic, rooted in the condemnation of any deviation from what she perceived as the norm. Both the “masculine” woman and the “womanly” man were singled out for her particular disapproval. The manly woman was one who not only imitated male attire and mannerisms but who displayed behaviour that in a man would be perceived as desirable. Self-assurance, originality, dynamism and a knowledge of and success in the outside world are what constituted for her the ideal in men and anathema in women. The ideal

⁴ Queen Victoria to King Leopold of Belgium, 1852, in Valerie Sanders’ Eve’s Renegades: Victorian Anti-Feminist Women Novelists, Macmillan. Basingstoke. 1996. p. 23. (Hereafter cited as Sanders, Renegades)

⁵ Queen Elizabeth I., speech to her troops at Tilbury on the approach of the Armada, 1588.

⁶ Paston, p.505.

woman displays, or rather possesses but does not parade, self-sacrifice and patience, preferring “simple love and homely living”, “unrewarded by applause”;⁷ whilst the qualities that detract from her womanliness, making her “less beautiful than she was meant to be” include “passionate ambition, virile energy, the love of strong excitement, self-assertion, fierceness and an undisciplined temper”.⁸ The womanly man, is, if anything, worse than his female counterpart; weak, vapid and ineffectual, too easily giving way to emotion and irrational feeling, too ready to acquiesce to his wife’s (inevitable) caprices, he is unable to be master over his home and family or to provide the guidance and support that a true woman needs, and he lacks the “self-mastery” that all womanly women respect.⁹ As such, the man who fails to live up to Linton’s ideal of masculinity threatens not only the stability of the family but, because the family represents patriarchal society in microcosm, he also threatens the stability of the nation.

Through much of her journalism Linton propounded very firm views on what it meant to be a woman and her view was that womanhood - femaleness- had nothing to do with rights and everything to do with duty. It was a woman’s duty to be a supportive wife and mother, marriage and motherhood representing of course the feminine ideal. It was a woman’s duty to maintain and defend the integrity of the home and family against the corruption of the outside world. Despite her support of the notion of separate spheres Linton did not subscribe to the “Angel in the House” concept of womanliness. Women were not semi-sacred goddesses to be venerated and cosseted; women should be robust, industrious and a partner in the house – albeit a junior partner with only nominal power and no voting rights.

She was a virulent opponent of female suffrage because (in a neat Catch 22) it would prevent women from fulfilling their proper biological function as wives and mothers, while being wives and mothers would prevent them being politically effective; “the cradle”, she claimed, “lies across the door of the polling booth and bars the way to the

⁷ Linton, “Ideal Women” Saturday Review, May 9 1868 in Social Essays Vol. I. p. 67, 59.

⁸ Linton, “Womanliness” Saturday Review, Aug. 6 1870 in Modern Women p. 365.

⁹ Linton, “The Ideal Husband” The Young Woman, Vol. 3, 1894. p. 57.

Senate”.¹⁰ She denied a women’s right to more than a basic education, anything else being both unnatural and unnecessary - she unmercifully satirized women graduates, Girton Girls, as both corrupt and corrupting: swearing, drinking and smoking, indulging in all manner of stimulants, displaying a lack of charm or morals, sensibility, sensitivity or mental vigour.¹¹ She vigorously defended the principle of separate spheres that embodied discrete social and political functions of the sexes and supported the notion that female subordination to male superiority was both natural and right.

A satisfactory definition of feminist and anti-feminist is hard enough to find at the beginning of the twenty-first century, harder still in the mid-nineteenth when the terms themselves had not yet entered the language. However, if we can reduce the definition of anti-feminist to the simplest possible, that of one who opposes the social and political advancement of women, applying the term to Eliza Lynn Linton would not cause many arguments. Indeed in her 1996 study Eve’s Renegades, Valerie Sanders describes Linton as the most “overtly anti-feminist” of the four writers on whom her study is based.¹² As Linton’s career, especially in the later years, was predicated on urging, exhorting and demanding in the most vitriolic terms that women should not be allowed the political or social rights granted to men, it is hardly surprising that her historical and literary legacy should be that of the archetypal anti-feminist. She was recognised, if not named as such, in her own day and even before the beginning of the twentieth-century came to be regarded as a symbol of the enemy within, emblematic of the reactionary and recalcitrant “Victorian” attitude that had to be overcome before women could be treated as equals in society.

Male opposition to the extension of women’s rights and a refusal to accept even the concept of gender equality, especially in the context of the Victorian era, is perhaps explicable; resistance to change, fear of loss of power and control, convention, gender insecurity, the presentation of scientific evidence of female inferiority, a reluctance to

¹⁰ Linton, “The Wild Women; As Politicians” Nineteenth Century, July 1891 reproduced in ‘Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors’: Victorian Writing by Women on Women, Susan Hamilton (ed.) Broadview Press, Peterborough, Ontario. 1996. p. 189.

¹¹ Linton, The One Too Many, 1894.

¹² Sanders, Renegades, p.206. The other novelists are Charlotte Yonge, Margeret Oliphant and Mrs. Humphry Ward.

share social and political privileges (some of which had only recently been won for men of the middle-classes) all combined to justify the notion of the “naturally” inferior female - thus it could be seen to be an orthodox male instinct to recoil from, oppose and repress, “unnatural” female behaviour. This is not to say, of course, that all men endorsed the notion of female inferiority or opposed female emancipation. Given that women were excluded from political participation, the Women’s Suffrage Movement had to rely on practical male support such as that offered by John Stuart Mill who presented their 1866 petition to Parliament. He argued in favour of women’s rights, moving for a number of amendments to the 1867 Reform Bill and his The Subjection of Women (1869) presented objective arguments that women receive equal treatment under the law and equal opportunities in education and employment. Linton’s husband William was himself an enthusiastic, if theoretical supporter of women’s rights, perceiving them as both necessary and desirable for the further democratisation of British society as a whole.

Anti-feminism in women is more problematic, and, although Linton was rather more outspoken than most, she was by no means unique in her position as an anti-feminist writer, as Sanders’ study indicates. Women’s anti-feminism, like that of men, is also rooted in a resistance to change and a belief in the hegemonic norm of female inferiority. Fear of the unknown, a desire to maintain the status quo or a reluctance to give up the Ruskinian position of “queen” that aligned the middle-class woman with her upper-class sisters and separated her from her working-class inferiors may also be a factor, as was an unwillingness to relinquish the quasi-sacred position of “Angel in the House”, that justified the notion of domestic confinement. On the other hand, expressing anti-feminist opinion also gives the impression of disloyalty; to be “against” one’s own sex seems treacherous and Linton was often accused of being the enemy of women, something that she vigorously refuted. (It may be that feminist critics have hitherto been reluctant to acknowledge that Linton can offer a contribution beyond her individual and particularized brand of anti-feminism because of the danger of risking being perceived as endorsing her opinions.) In the case of Linton as an individual it is probable that jealousy and resentment also entered into the equation. Paston’s observation (above, n. 6) implies the existence of a proto-feminist sisterhood, of which

circumstances suggested Linton should have been a part. However, having laboured long and hard to achieve her own position she was reluctant to see that position challenged by women who did not have to overcome the same obstacles. Rather than welcoming other women as colleagues or comrades she was much more inclined to “pull up the ladder” to prevent anyone following.

Nevertheless, for whatever reason, it remains the case that most men and a large proportion of women were reasonably content with maintaining the social and political status quo and the determined voices raised in support of women’s rights did not represent commonly held opinion. All the same, as a number of studies have pointed out, whether this was regarded as a welcome development or not, the role of women in British society was - largely through the efforts of a minority - a changing one.¹³ Social debate that focused on women’s position and status in society was not new of course, as the presence of any number of prescriptive books and articles on class codes and correct models of social behaviour reveal.¹⁴ However, times of fastest change give greatest impetus to such debate and by the middle of the nineteenth century all aspects of women’s lives were under scrutiny, giving rise to the “woman question” that was to occupy society and the pen of Eliza Linton for much of the second half of the nineteenth century.

Anti-feminist is in itself a reactionary term – just as it describes a reactionary attitude – in order to be “anti” there must exist something which one opposes, and the stridency and vitriol of Linton’s opposition rose in proportion to the level of actual or potential social and political change that Linton could see, despite all her labours, was inevitable. Susan Faludi, writing in the context of the late twentieth century, points out that backlashes against women’s advancement, what she terms flare-ups in the viral condition of institutionalised resistance to women’s rights, are “hardly random; they have always been triggered by the perceptions – accurate or not – that women are making great strides”. In a change of metaphor she argues that the tide of feminism generates a resistance of “countercurrents and treacherous undertows...which churn

¹³ Martha Vicinus, A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women Methuen, London. 1980.

¹⁴ Such as Mrs. Stickney Ellis’ The Women of England: Their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits (1839) and The Daughters of England: Their Position in Society, Character and Responsibilities (1842)

beneath the surface”.¹⁵ Linton’s countercurrent of resistance helped create an apparently more placid, but inexorable pressure of opposition against her position that ultimately served to undermine her own arguments.

As an unwitting and involuntary force for social change, Linton was nevertheless backward looking and reactionary; nostalgic for a bygone era that never truly existed, she perpetuated the myth of the feminine ideal and castigated those who failed to live up to it. Condemning what she saw as the destructive excesses of modern society on the Victorian ideal of the patriarchal family, she failed to recognise that by giving voice to her own extreme opinions she was provoking more conservative sections of society, who might otherwise concur with the principles which she was endorsing, into questioning the validity of her arguments. In addition, by deliberately adopting as calm and measured approach as possible when refuting her allegations her opponents counter arguments, such as that included in Mona Caird’s response to Linton’s “Wild Women” articles, seemed doubly reasonable.

It would be interesting to make a collection from the writings of Mrs. Lynn Linton of all the terrific charges that she has brought against her sex, adding them up in two columns, and placing side by side the numerous couples that contradict each other. At the end of this sad list one might place the simple sentence of defence. “No, we aren’t!” and although this would certainly lack the eloquence and literary quality of Mrs. Lynn Linton’s arguments, I deny that it would yield to them in cogency.¹⁶

The exasperation embedded in Caird’s comments, and the frustration that she felt in the face of Linton’s often self-contradictory arguments, is clear. Less overt, and without the personal reference, Augusta Webster’s earlier A Housewife’s Opinions (1879) were almost certainly also aimed at repudiating Linton’s indictments in The Saturday Review and elsewhere, against English womanhood. Webster admits that at first the essays were “jaunty and clever, and decidedly amusing, and society was ready for more” but had

¹⁵ Susan Faludi, Backlash, Chatto & Windus, London. 1992. p. 13, 15.

¹⁶ Mona Caird, “A Defense Of The So-Called ‘Wild Women’ ” Nineteenth Century, May 1892. Reproduced in ‘Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors’, Susan Hamilton (ed.) Broadview, Ontario. 1996. p. 288.

now gone on too long and had ventured too far and were endangering those whom they purported to protect.¹⁷

It has been argued that the notion of separate spheres that lay at the heart of middle-class gender ideology “reinforced gender loyalty” and helped to create in women “a stronger collective identity”.¹⁸ This may well be the case, [en]gendering the creation of a familiar “us” with shared experience and expectations, in juxtaposition to an alien and unfamiliar “them” whose status was predicated on division. (But the same argument can equally apply to the women, Paston’s “sisters”, who sought to break out of that assigned sphere.) Although we are also reminded that feminists generally were not a cohesive group, anti-feminists even less so, and may have taken positions on some issues that would have aligned them with the opposite camp.¹⁹ This is true even for Linton who supported a woman’s entitlement to control her own property after marriage, and more easily achievable and equal access to divorce.

No matter where Linton’s ideology was rooted she never seriously considered herself any part of a sisterhood, invariably referring to women as “they”, and aligning herself with a dominant, male, hegemonic “we”. Two notable exceptions to this occur in private letters, the first, to T H Huxley is discussed in the “science” section; the second was to her sister in which she wrote, “ I hate women as a race, Lucy. I think we are demons. Individually we are alright, but as a race we are monkeyish, cruel, irresponsible, superficial”.²⁰ In journalism, much of which was anonymous, the adoption of a male voice was the norm, indeed, except when writing on specifically female subjects – such as child rearing, etiquette and the correct treatment of servants – the credibility and importance of a piece of writing depended on its masculine authority, thus Linton’s male voice in her journalism was customary. Much more problematic was her adoption in her autobiography of a male persona.

¹⁷ Augusta Webster “The Depravity of English Ladies” *A Housewife’s Opinions*, Macmillan, London. 1879. p. 17.

¹⁸ Sanders, *Renegades*, p. 17. Sanders is primarily referring here to the first half of the century.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 7.

²⁰ Linton to Lucy Gedge, Jan. 1898, Layard, p. 343. *Ourselves* is a rare example of Linton’s publicly aligning herself with her own sex.

II. Revisions in critical appraisal: No longer just an interesting footnote.

That Linton saw herself as part of male orthodoxy is evident in The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland (1885) in which she transposes her own sex and adopts a male guise. Practically, because Linton inverted her own sex she was constrained to do the same to those with whom she had more than a passing relationship, or rather, some of them. The poet Walter Savage Landor retained his name and his sex, whilst she became “dear son” rather than “dear daughter”. Family solicitor William Loaden, whose persuasions had convinced James Lynn to allow his daughter to move to London, kept his sex but not his name, becoming Mr. King. Linton may have given him a regal appellation as a means of respect, but it would have been more respectful still to use his real name. Her one great, and inevitably lost love Dr. Edward MacDermot is represented as Cordelia Gilchrist. She even changed the names of some of her brothers and sisters; Lucy, the blue eyed, blonde haired little angel, retains the eyes and the hair and the angelic personality - but is transformed into brother Edwin.

Linton’s husband William is represented as Esther Lambert and the section of Kirkland that covers the short and disastrous marriage of Christopher and Esther/ Eliza and William illustrates one of the many difficulties that Linton’s strategy occasions. Linton cannot realistically portray Esther as an engraver so she becomes “a lecturer of some repute”, and that anathema, a “Woman’s Right’s woman from head to heel,” whose “political creed was her religion; the emancipation of woman was her mission; the equalization of the sexes was her shibboleth; but the supremacy of woman was her secret sacrament”.²¹ Linton’s depiction of Esther’s refusal to love, honour and obey the noble and self-sacrificing Christopher is persuasive and she successfully translates William’s inability to provide a secure and stable life for his children into Esther’s maternal inadequacies. However Esther’s steadfast refusal to acquiesce to her husband’s authority serves to diminish the character’s masculine credibility. While they were living in London William, much to Linton’s annoyance had invited a Polish refugee, ‘Monsieur Boris’ to live with them. As the character of Kirkland describes this guest and Esther conspiring together behind locked doors, “whence I was rigidly excluded”,

²¹ Kirkland III. p. 16, 20-21.

his personality is transformed from that of patient, long-suffering spouse into that of an ineffectual cuckold.²²

The M. Boris episode apart, Linton's generally successful inversion of the sexes where her marriage is concerned is not typical of the whole of the text. More often her adoption of the male persona serves to diminish much of her singular experience, rendering it less remarkable and on occasion making her appear pathetic. In Kirkland Linton is able to regularise a number of the close same-sex friendships that she enjoyed through her life, characterising them as the romantic relationships that she clearly wished they had been. But because Kirkland is the life of Linton these relationships cannot ever successfully realise her paradigm of the ideal and culminate in a fulfilling loving physical marriage. Nevertheless in Kirkland Linton's explication of these affairs does mirror her own experience, the same cannot be said for her professional life.

We have seen that from an early age it had been Linton's intention to achieve "work, fame, liberty and happiness" and that she was single-minded and courageous enough to embark on an independent literary career in order to achieve that ambition. This is reflected in Kirkland's statement that he had "outgrown the dimensions of the old home" and his desire to make his way in the world.²³ As the ambitions of a young man this was, even then, hardly remarkable, it is much more remarkable that they should be the goals of a young woman. However, the scale of Linton's literary ambitions and the rigours of the battle she had to achieve them are obscured, partly because of her adopted male persona and partly because of the level at which she set the targets. Kirkland exclaims:

Once give me my liberty, my majority, and my share of the small fortune left us by our grandfather, and let me go into the world for myself, and I would be happy...I would be famous and do great things. I would cover my name with glory and all those who had not believed in me with confusion. ...I used to dream of the senior wranglership at Cambridge and of the leadership of the House of Commons. I would go to the bar and be Lord Chancellor, or remain a freelance and be Prime Minister. I would make a name: I would be great. Whatever I did I would succeed.

CK I. p. 109

²² Ibid. III. pp. 45-47. 'M. Boris' was Anton Zabicki.

²³ Ibid. I. p. 236.

But Kirkland's ambitions are focused on higher education, politics and the law, institutions that were specifically barred to women. As the aspirations of an idealistic young man there is nothing extraordinary about them; it is to be expected that he should dream of achieving great things, of covering his name with glory. Much more extraordinary would be the cry of "give me liberty" and the ambitions of a nineteenth century clergyman's daughter to "go out into the world" and to "make a name" for herself, and still more extraordinary that she should succeed. But Kirkland clearly cannot achieve his ambition, because this is the story of Eliza Lynn Linton, whose sex forbade her from embarking on such a career path, let alone succeeding.

From our point of view and that of her contemporaries, and in the light of her own stated literary ambition, Linton's achievements were remarkable. And yet in her autobiography she deliberately chooses to write in such a way that she cannot ever allow herself to succeed; in Christopher Kirkland Linton is, literally, the author of her own failure.

In his Mrs. Lynn Linton: Her Life, Letters and Opinions George Somes Layard, Linton's literary executor and her first biographer, identified the reason for the critical and commercial failure of The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland as Linton's idea, "conceived in an unfortunate moment", of reversing her own sex and that of many of her characters "for their better disguise". He says, "To those who could read between the lines the effect was somewhat bizarre, while to those not in the secret the story was in parts incomprehensible".²⁴ Whether it was ill conceived or not, this inversion of the sexes, as Somes suggests, makes The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland rather more problematic than is usual in books of the genre. Layard certainly found Linton's transposition of the sexes disturbing, rendering parts of Kirkland an uncomfortable read, and felt that he should save his own readers from similar discomfort. In addition to feeling it "obligatory to make copious extracts, dotting the i's and crossing the t's where necessary", his mediation of Kirkland goes far beyond grammatical detail or editorial comment. He has "not scrupled" he says, "to readjust names and sexes in such

²⁴ Layard, preface, p. xii.

quotations as have been made, for the constant pulling-up of the reader by a bracketed (he) here or a bracketed (she) there would have proved tiresome and offensive”.²⁵

Making the critical judgment that Linton’s text is “of course marred by the fact that it is of a woman masquerading as a man”, and in a move that says as much about him as it does about his subject (while also raising numerous questions relating to the role of biographer) he feels justified in “making it [his] business to strip the figure of doublet and hose and reclothe it in the garments proper to its sex”.²⁶

But this presents Layard with a problem. If Linton’s contemporary readers found Kirkland bizarre, how much more bizarre would it seem if Layard gave each character their true identity? Linton describes a number of close, often deeply intense, relationships with women and the assumption of a male persona allows her to translate these relationships into heterosexual romances. When Layard readjusts the sex of the protagonists he is faced with the problem that what was a heterosexual relationship then becomes a homosexual one. He deals with this in the time honoured way - he generally pretends they do not happen. The intense passion that the adolescent Linton developed for the woman known as Adeline Dalrymple (discussed above) has a sizable section of Kirkland dedicated to their relationship and Linton’s description of what is plainly sexual arousal and orgasmic release is daringly frank:

Her hand closed on mine with an almost convulsive grasp. It burnt like fire, and the diamonds at her throat flashed as if by their own internal light. Her voice had sunk almost to a whisper, and something seemed to pass from her to me which thrilled me like electricity. I could not speak. My heart swelled so that it strangled my voice and cut short my breath. ...I scarcely lived: I did not breathe; I was as if spiritually carried away into another sphere; and for the moment I was not human but immortal. It was a sensation beyond mere physical excitement; and it would have been appalling from its intensity, had I enough consciousness left to examine or reflect.

CK I. pp. 200-201

It is hardly surprising that it made Layard uncomfortable, although he does recognise that this relationship represents a seminal moment in Linton’s life and that he cannot

²⁵ Ibid. preface, p. viii.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 247.

ignore it altogether. Linton dedicates an entire chapter, 40 pages, to the episode.²⁷

Layard, manifestly embarrassed by the event, dismisses it as briefly as he can, explaining that:

Due to the unfortunate plan of the book, the not unusual phenomenon of a girl's infatuation for a woman eight or ten years her senior is metamorphosed into the passionate devotion of a youth for a young and fascinating married woman. The result is that the whole situation is changed, and wrong causations of necessity suggest themselves. ...The incident must as far as possible be cleared of its unnatural atmosphere. It is sufficiently bizarre without any eccentric additions.²⁸

But in drawing attention to the bizarreness and eccentricity of Linton's strategy he makes the reader doubly aware of the ambiguity of Linton's situation.

One of the things that Linton's strategy did allow her to do however, was to successfully voice opinions or points of view that might otherwise have situated her beyond the bounds of propriety. Thus, as will be discussed at greater length in subsequent sections, Kirkland allows Linton the freedom to expound the development of her agnosticism and her support for the "manly" sciences. In going from endorsing patriarchal ideology to actually locating herself within the male sphere Linton was able to explicate her masculine stance without endangering her womanliness, thus liberating herself from the same gender constraints that she attempted to apply to others. But the tactic that she employed in order to free herself from the cultural limitations of a conventional autobiography proved so disconcerting to her contemporary readership, and so (understandably) alluring to more recent critics that it has served to overshadow the significance of Kirkland as a means of access into other aspects of the author and her time; a situation that, through an analysis of Kirkland, together with a number of Linton's other works, this thesis seeks to resolve.

Layard did not meet Linton until late in her life and was therefore constrained, as his biographical successors have been, to draw extensively on the detail provided in Kirkland to supplement his personal knowledge. In spite of this drawback, and notwithstanding his own editorial process, Layard's biography, particularly the

²⁷ Kirkland I. Chapter VII.

²⁸ Layard p.41.

correspondence that it contains, provides an invaluable resource for subsequent research.

Despite the statement on the dust jacket, that his book comes out of a “life-long liking and admiration for Eliza Lynn Linton; enjoyment of her novels and journalism [and] a deep interest in the literary life of her time”, Herbert van Thal’s Eliza Lynn Linton: The Girl of the Period (1979) is a virtual reworking of the Layard text that adds little to the already established body of knowledge. He advances the same argument as Layard in noting that the adoption of the male persona of Christopher Kirkland was a device that enabled Linton to be more candid about her personal relationships than she might otherwise have been. His observation that, “her reasons were, of course, that for so frank a credo she would be unable to identify the partners of her ‘love affairs’ or of many of those close to her”, hints at the possibility of lesbianism, though he goes no further than vague insinuation.²⁹

Nancy Fix Anderson in her psychobiography, Woman against Women in Victorian England (1987) while perceiving the transposition of the sexes in Kirkland as clear evidence of the depth of Linton’s male identification, evinces a great deal more sympathy for her subject than previous biographers. Quoting from a letter that Linton had written to her publisher concerning her strategy, which functioned as “a screen which takes off the sting of boldness and self-exposure”, Anderson argues that Linton’s exchange of sex was “not a screen but a mirror, which reflected her deep unconscious feelings of maleness”, although Linton’s recognition that the “boldness” of the thoughts and actions she explored in Kirkland would be mitigated through a male voice does suggest a conscious rather than unconscious rationale.³⁰ Drawing extensively on detailed analysis, not only of Kirkland but also numerous other examples from Linton’s fiction and journalism, in support of all three contentions, Anderson claims for Linton, in addition to her “male identification”, an “unconscious lesbian orientation” and a “misogynistic belief in male superiority”; the combination of which, she argues,

²⁹ The referencing in Layard and in van Thal is less than comprehensive, the lack in Layard can be excused in that it was not customary at the time to provide such detail, the casual nature of van Thal’s citation is not so easy to excuse.

³⁰ Anderson, Woman against Women, p. 11.

provided the motivation for the extreme anti-feminism for which Eliza Lynn Linton has become a watchword.³¹ Central to Anderson's thesis is her contention that Linton's anti-feminism was a result of the internal tensions created between the recognition within herself of her own "masculine attributes" and "inner conflicts about her sexual identity" which allowed her to adopt a position of superiority over lesser women.

Jealousy, an unconscious denial of her own femaleness, and a projected self-hatred, along with contempt for the distortions of womanhood produced by Victorian patriarchy, all combined to create in her a bitter hatred of her own sex.³²

She presents a strong case for Linton's male identification and for her apparent misogyny; however, Anderson's psychobiography, as might be expected from the form is reductive rather than expansive and her study falls short by not fully taking into consideration the cultural pressures on women in Linton's position. As a woman determined to "find work, fame, liberty and happiness" in a patriarchal society, in a profession largely the sphere of men and mediated through the male voice, without the benefit of an effective male mentor and without the supportive safety net of a secure family background, Linton had to make herself acceptable and her work commercially viable. Faced with the dilemma of having to conform to dominant social models of propriety whilst transgressing hegemonic notions of the ideal she can be seen in a wider sense as a living outward symbol of middle-class society's inner tensions. This is not to suggest that Linton professed an anti-feminist sentiment to which she did not subscribe, nor that Nancy Anderson does not present a persuasive argument; rather that the circumstances of Linton's background, ambition and personal philosophy, in combination with, rather than discrete from, prevailing social conditions must inevitably have a much greater impact on her work than Anderson's otherwise excellent study might suggest.

Convincing as Anderson is, it should also be noted that lesbianism, unconscious or otherwise, misogyny and "feelings of maleness" do not necessarily or inevitably go together. Indeed, in many ways drawing a connection between these three positions

³¹ Ibid. p. 13, 127, 133.

³² Ibid. p. 232.

could be seen as contradictory. A correlation between masculine identification and misogyny assumes that a hatred of women represents the norm of male behaviour for which Anderson offers no evidence (although she does offer a plethora of evidence in support of her contention of Linton's own misogyny). Belief in male superiority was in itself customary, it was an intrinsic element of established culture and as such accepted without question by the majority of women as well as by men. Further, many women who held influential roles in society and who professed great sympathy for their own sex nevertheless endorsed the ideology of separate spheres, contested the necessity of an extension of women's rights and were firm opponents of female suffrage.

For the most part modern opinion has until recently regarded Eliza Lynn Linton as an eccentric novelty, an oddity whose chief interest lies in her personal situation, that of a defiantly independent woman who just as defiantly opposed the independence of women.³³ An article in The Journal of Modern History observed that "as interesting as the furore [Linton] unleashed...is the author's own life, which was in total contradiction with the ideal of femininity she advocated", and Vineta Colby, whose own The Singular Anomaly played a key part in bringing Linton back to critical attention felt compelled to write in 1988, that Eliza Lynn Linton "remains merely a curiosity".³⁴

However, since those words were written, critical analysis, feminist and otherwise, has broadened its horizons where Eliza Lynn Linton is concerned. After almost a century of being largely consigned to an interesting footnote or passing reference she is beginning to be considered as much more than an eccentric oddity whose chief interest was as an anachronism. No longer relegated to the margins of Victorian literature Linton's "star is clearly rising".³⁵ Critical attention is now expanding its assessment of Linton into contexts beyond that of anti-feminist didact and considering her location to other key issues of her time.

³³ Helsinger, et. al. pp. 103-106.

³⁴ Dina M. Copelman, "Liberal Ideology, Sexual Difference, and the Lives of Women: Recent Works in British History" Journal of Modern History, Vol. 62 1990. p. 335. Vineta Colby, review of Nancy Fix Anderson, Woman against Women in Nineteenth-Century Literature Vol. 43, No 3, Dec. 1988. p. 411.

³⁵ Valerie Sanders, "Eliza Lynn Linton and the Canon" in The Rebel of the Family, Deborah T. Meem (ed.) Broadview Press, Peterborough, Ontario. 2002. pp. 475-476. (Hereafter, Sanders, Canon.)

In her paper, “Eliza Lynn Linton and the Rise of Lesbian Consciousness” Deborah Meem takes issue with Anderson’s conception of Linton’s “unconscious” lesbian orientation, arguing that Linton was almost certainly aware of her own sexual proclivities. She contends that Linton’s male orientation was “certainly conscious” and that she displayed an “up-to-date familiarity with the growing lesbian presence in England during the last third of the nineteenth-century”.³⁶ Meem’s research is at the forefront in considering Linton’s significance in relation to gay and lesbian scholarship and much investigation is still to be undertaken. Nevertheless Meem is confident that Linton’s representations of same sex relationships and the creation of Bell Blount in Rebel, as the “first fully realised ‘modern’ lesbian woman in English Literature”, reveal Linton’s novels as “unique in English Literature and valuable for queer scholars today...reflecting both [Victorian] social reality and a consuming cultural anxiety”.³⁷

The evidence of Layard’s attempts to readjust the sexes in Kirkland and to dismiss the central strategy of Linton’s autobiography as “unfortunate” suggests that his own response supports Meem’s notion of a “consuming cultural anxiety.” His strategy of attempting to efface Linton’s transposition of her sex indicates his own concern that neither the subject of his biography, nor perhaps his biography itself, should play an active role in perpetuating the disquiet to which Meem’s study draws attention.

In a short but incisive consideration of Kirkland in Eve’s Renegades (1996) and at greater length in her earlier The Private Lives of Victorian Women (1989) Valerie Sanders considers Linton’s “transvestite autobiography” from a wider perspective than that of previous studies. Like earlier biographers, she sees that the “cross-dressing of the Autobiography...enabled Linton to declare her passionate love for other women”, allowing Linton to explicate opinions that “would have been unpublishable in a work purporting to be by a woman”. However, she considers that this is the “simplest” interpretation of the text. More crucially, she identifies Kirkland as being “in conflict with [Linton’s] usual efforts to preserve sexual boundaries at all costs” and suggests that it betrays the author’s “unconscious desire for a less rigidly arranged allocation of

³⁶ Deborah Meem. “Eliza Lynn Linton and the Rise of Lesbian Consciousness” Journal of the History of Sexuality, Vol. 7, pt. 4. 1997. p. 538; see also her introduction to Rebel (2002).

³⁷ Ibid. pp. 559-560.

spheres” which would in turn have made her personal life less problematic.³⁸ In common with previous studies, Sanders also concentrates on Linton’s gender positioning, but her Private Lives also places Kirkland within a framework of women’s autobiographical writing in which women developed alternative strategies and rhetorical devices through which to write their lives; amongst which is the exclusive sub-genre of “pseudo-male, pseudo-autobiography” in which she places Kirkland as an example of a text that clearly demonstrates the “double life” faced by women writers who attempt to negotiate the perilous chasm between public and private spheres.³⁹

Sally Ledger in The New Woman: Fiction and feminism at the *fin de siècle* (1997) asserts that it was Linton, through the “dominant hostile discourse” of her “Wild Women” articles of the early 1890s, who created the prototype for the New Woman. Ledger discusses how hostile discourse in the periodical press gave rise to a “reverse discourse” in which the real New Woman, that is the prototype feminist, began to speak on her own behalf.⁴⁰ In fact, Linton’s “dominant hostile discourse” precedes this by three decades, and her “Girl of the Period” can clearly be seen to be the antecedent of the New Woman. Despite her condemnation of the New Woman and her predecessor in her journalism, Linton’s fiction can be seen to foreshadow the New Woman writing of the *fin de siècle*. Her [anti] heroines are articulate, well educated, anxious for sexual and economic freedom, philosophical and deep thinking; they are women of principle and high ideals but they are also often neurotic, lonely, unfulfilled and self-destructive, many of her female characters bear an uncanny likeness to their creator. Indeed, as one of her contemporaries noted, there was much of the New Woman about Linton herself, observing “Miss Lynn, in her youth [was] the newest of New Women”.⁴¹

Significant as each of these studies is, they focus primarily on Linton’s sexual orientation and/or her anti-feminism, largely to the exclusion of other considerations. Which, as Andrea L. Broomfield points out in “Much More Than an Antifeminist: Eliza Lynn Linton’s Contribution to the Rise of Victorian Popular Journalism” (2000),

³⁸ Sanders, Renegades, pp. 106-107. The Private Lives of Victorian Women, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1989. p. 92. (Hereafter cited as Sanders, Lives)

³⁹ Sanders, Lives, p.100.

⁴⁰ Sally Ledger, The New Woman: Fiction and feminism at the *fin de siècle*, Manchester University Press, Manchester. 1997. pp. 10-12.

⁴¹ Paston, p. 506.

“obscures the importance of the role [Linton] played in the development of popular journalism”.⁴² Broomfield by no means suggests that Linton’s gender position is not important, rather she is concerned that her anti-feminism should not overshadow her equally significant location to other important areas, such as that of her relation to the history of Victorian Women Journalists; an area also recently explored in Barbara Onslow’s Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain (2000). Onslow’s “broadly historical and mildly feminist” study places Linton into a wider framework of Victorian women journalists, assessing her position as a professional columnist, a “Jill of all Trades”, while simultaneously providing a wealth of valuable contextual detail regarding the practical problems and the economic, social and commercial pressures experienced by women journalists as a whole.⁴³

In addition to its contribution to the epistemology of women’s writing, Onslow’s text also offers a valuable complement to previous Linton studies, whilst, like Broomfield, reminding us that research with too narrow a focus may serve to obscure, rather than disclose other areas of historical and literary significance. Onslow’s and Broomfield’s research goes some way in responding to Sanders’ observation that Linton’s role in “the evolution of the woman journalist remains crucial, if historically mystifying,” central to which is the still not fully resolved place of “The Girl of the Period”, and her creator.⁴⁴ The article’s significance is recognised, the influence it was to have on public debate, patterns of writing and the number of imitators it generated and the access to the means of contradiction it invited, are all readily acknowledged, but the personal circumstances of its writer continue to remain as important as the article itself. In an interesting and cogent discussion of “The Girl of the Period”, Elizabeth Helsinger and her co-editors identify the article’s publication as a “defining moment” in women’s history. But they remain undecided about the centrality of its author. Whilst recognising Linton as emblematic of the contradictions of the age - her life was a “tangle of paradoxes” in which she struggled to “reconcile impulses and attitudes which were as contradictory as

⁴² Andrea L Broomfield, “Much More Than an Antifeminist: Eliza Lynn Linton’s Contribution to the Rise of Victorian Popular Journalism” Victorian Literature and Culture, Spring 2000. Also, “Blending Journalism with Fiction: Eliza Lynn Linton and Her Rise to Fame as a Popular Novelist” in Rebel (2002).

⁴³ Barbara Onslow Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain, Macmillan, Basingstoke. 2000. preface. p. xi. Chapter title (10) “Jill of all Trades”.

⁴⁴ Sanders, Renegades, p. 132.

the Victorian period itself” - they perceive her largely as a controversialist, while at the same acknowledging her facility for reflecting the social and cultural moment.⁴⁵ Characteristically, Linton is, at the same time, included and excluded from historical and literary significance.

Despite her religious iconoclasm, her professed republicanism and early radicalism, Linton was born and remained a proponent of middle-class ideals. The daughter of a north country clergyman and the granddaughter of a Bishop, Linton consistently endorsed the cultural values of hard work, diligence, self-help, thrift, duty and propriety (even if she did not always embody the norms) that historically have been associated with the Victorian middle classes; principles which late twentieth-century politicians referred to longingly as “basics”; conveniently forgetting that also “basic” to the age were conflict, anxiety, repression and domination. Elements that, far from being confined to the area of gender relations formed a significant part of the cultural tensions that permeated virtually every area of Victorian life. Not least of which was the increasing concern over the place of the church and of religious belief in public and private life, doctrinal antagonisms, and an ever-widening divergence between church and science. It is the intention of this thesis to demonstrate that Linton’s exploration of religion and science while inevitably informed by social constructs of sex and Linton’s personal notions of gender roles is not bound by them, and that her importance goes beyond that of gender polemicist.

The following section will consider Linton’s exposition of the place of religion in society, and women in religion. It will chronicle her own loss of faith and examine her representation of religion and its representatives as intellectually backward, socially divisive and morally suspect.

⁴⁵ Helsinger, et al. pp. 103-106.

Religion

“Make your own brick perfect in the living temple of Society”.

In 1851 an official census took place to record attendance at places of worship on one particular Sunday (30th March). What it found was that a little over half of the nation's eighteen million inhabitants attended church or chapel on that day, and of that number the overwhelming majority were either Anglican or from one of the various Nonconformist Protestant groups and were from the middle-classes.¹ Later, less inclusive surveys revealed that at the end of the century the proportion, and origin, of church attendance remained largely the same. For a significant proportion of the population religion was central to everyday life and for this very reason it came under intense examination. For a nation undergoing such vigorous questioning of many of the hitherto accepted social paradigms it was inevitable that religious orthodoxy should also come into question. Misgivings arose from a variety of directions. For many the Church of England was too complacent, too conservative and reactionary to adequately represent the interests of a society in transition. Evangelism was often perceived as aggressive and domineering, features no longer acceptable to a population who were participating more actively in national life. Nonconformity was frequently seen as narrow and intolerant.² In addition, and arguably most importantly, both intellectual inquiry and scientific advances threw into doubt the veracity of the literal truth of the bible, thus giving rise to reservations about all its teaching and tradition. The cumulative effect of this mounting unease was not, as we have seen, to take the majority of church-goers away from regular worship, but rather to initiate, amongst certain small but nevertheless influential sections of society, a move away from belief and toward agnosticism and secular commitment. For the preponderance of worshipers religious faith was a matter of the heart, not the intellect; it was rooted in ethical and moral issues

¹ Census of Religious Worship, England and Wales. Report and Tables, London, 1853. This census also revealed that large numbers of the urban poor had little or no understanding, or connection with, religious life of any description. McLeod, in Religion and Society in England estimates that of the 59 percent of the population who attended worship on that day approximately half (51%) were Anglican, 44 percent Nonconformist, 4% Roman Catholic, while the remaining one percent was made up of groups from small religious bodies 'outside the Christian mainstream.'

² There were exceptions; non-conformists became involved in a number of reform movements, including public health, anti-slavery, child labour legislation and prison reform.

and formed an integral part of social culture. For this section of society underlying discontent manifested itself in the shifting popularity of a number of sects and breakaway religious factions, rather than a questioning of belief itself. For some however, there could be no accommodation between faith and doubt, and unbelief was the inevitable outcome. Moreover, while in all probability the greatest proportion of doubters preferred to keep their reservations to themselves, there were an increasing number who were prepared to make their misgivings known.

I. Doubt and Anxiety in Daily Life: Changing models of religious belief.

As the daughter of a conservative Anglican clergyman, Christian observance was axiomatic to the young Eliza Lynn; yet very early in her life she began to question the reliability of the scriptures and by her mature womanhood she had, like a number of her contemporaries, rejected Christian orthodoxy in favour of agnosticism. What makes Linton so noteworthy is that through her texts she presents a deep and often intensely personal exploration of her own journey from faith through uncertainty to disbelief, offering a rare insight into the heart of the Victorian psyche. In addition, her contribution to the body of “unsettling” literature both mirrored and informed public opinion. What have come to be seen as Eliza Lynn Linton’s religious novels were amongst her most successful and, barring a new edition of The Rebel of the Family (2002), are the only ones that have been reissued to date.³ They were also amongst her most controversial texts, although, unlike her woman question writings, they were concerned with a site of controversy more familiar, and rather more acceptable, to the Victorian reading public. As Robert Wolff points out:

[O]f all the subjects that interested Victorians, and therefore preoccupied their novelists, none – not love, or crime, or war, or sport, or ancestry, or even money – held their attention as much as religion.⁴

³ The True History of Joshua Davidson, Christian and Communist (1872), Under Which Lord? (1879) and The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland (1885) were each reprinted in facsimiles of the original editions, in Garland’s 1976 series “Novels of Faith and Doubt”. Of the three texts, only Under Which Lord? fits comfortably into the “novel” genre. The Rebel of the Family, Deborah Meem (ed) Broadview Press, Ontario.2002.

⁴ Robert Lee Wolff, Gains and Losses, John Murray, London. 1977. pp. 1-2. This is the introductory volume to the series “Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England” of which Wolff is the editor.

As this suggests, the centrality of religion to cultural identity was fundamental to the middle-class Victorian disposition. Unlike most modern readers Linton's contemporaries would need no footnote in order fully to comprehend the Roman Catholic undercurrents, and the potential for social division, of the High Church priest in Under Which Lord? reading Wiseman's Fabiola or Newman's Apologia to the ladies of the church sewing circle as they work "beautiful embroidery for church purposes".⁵

In her explorations of religious belief Linton was by no means unique; many writers explored the themes of religious debate, revelation or iconoclastic rebellion in their fiction, reflecting both the public controversy and the private concern of intellectual society, a number of such texts becoming phenomenal best sellers. Mrs Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere (1888) dealt with many of the same issues as Linton's Under Which Lord?, as Catherine Elsmere is torn between her own intense faith and her love for her husband whose own intellectual and philosophical convictions force him to leave the church. However, Robert Elsmere proved much more popular with the reading public, as did William Hale White's Autobiography of Mark Rutherford (1881) which traced, in a similar way to Christopher Kirkland (though from a dissenting perspective) the eponymous protagonist's journey from unquestioning faith through doubt and desolation, to the rejection of dogma and the development of a personal credo rooted in egalitarian dedication to humanity. However, despite their similarities, while the Autobiography of Mark Rutherford was a novel, a fictional account of an imagined life, Linton's Kirkland was an account of her own life and experiences.⁶ Furthermore, few works, fictional or otherwise, were as deeply personal as Linton's, nor so explicitly critical in their denunciation of religious orthodoxy, church establishment and the men who represented them, as hers consistently were.

⁵ Under Which Lord? I. p. 123. Roman Catholic Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman (1802-65) First Archbishop of Westminster (1850), author of the novel Fabiola: or The Church of the Catacombs (1854). John Henry Newman (1801-90). Newman began as an Anglican, converted to Catholicism in 1845 and was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest. His autobiography Apologia pro Vita Sua (1864) sets out the history of his religious views and offers a defence against the accusation leveled at him by Charles Kingsley, that "he did not consider truth a necessary virtue". Kingsley, see n. 48.

⁶ As Hale White published other works under the name of Mark Rutherford it is likely that it was read as autobiography even though it was actually fiction. Not for nothing has autobiography been called a "slippery medium". There has been some discussion over the categorisation of Kirkland as novel or as autobiography, Margaret Mather, Linton's stepdaughter insisted that it was a work of fiction, although given the unsympathetic representation of her father this is perhaps not surprising.

In Joshua Davidson Linton embarks on a comprehensive condemnation of the Church of England as an “unchristian” institution, arguing that a nineteenth-century Christ would be a communist and that the hypocritical nineteenth-century church establishment would seek to destroy him. High Church Ritualism was her target in Under Which Lord? in which she denounces the church as a destructive force, exerting a damaging influence over women, setting wife against husband and destroying, rather than upholding, family life. While suggesting that religious belief comes more easily to women because of their innate emotional dependency Under Which Lord? seeks to expose the dangers faced by a society which acquiesces to religious (particularly Catholic) authority. Christopher Kirkland also interrogates the divisive influence of the church on human relationships. Whilst not exclusively focussed on religious themes this *roman à clef*, in devoting much attention to chronicling the development of the adolescent Linton’s loss of faith, detailing the birth and development of her religious doubt and its maturation into agnosticism, affords an exclusive insight into the religious doubts and anxiety that assailed the society in which she lived. Linton believed that the account of her spiritual struggle was so fundamental to the text that she had considered calling it “Confessions of an Agnostic”, confirming that she judged her scepticism to be essential to her personal identity.⁷ What she was not aware of was how significant her “confession” would be in informing subsequent understanding of the period, not least the religious and doctrinal tensions to which the enquiring intellect was exposed.

Nineteenth-century England saw the established church torn with internecine struggle. In an admirably concise passage Wolff describes the pressures to which the religious institutions were subject and their consequences, pressures that are both reflected and explored through Linton’s highly individual writing.

The Church of England was rent by party controversy, with “High-Church” partisans battling “Low-Church” partisans, and – by the 1850’s – a small but vocal and influential “Broad-Church” group opposed to both and to the very

⁷ Letter from Linton to George Bentley, Dec. 21, 1884, in Anderson, Woman against Women, p. 178. It was Thomas Huxley, in 1869, some sixteen years before the publication of Kirkland, who coined the term “agnostic”, giving a name to a state of belief (or rather lack of belief) that many people had already reached for themselves. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary (1993) defines an agnostic as one who believes that “nothing can be known of the existence of God or of anything beyond material phenomena”.

existence of party spirit. Quarrels raged over a wide variety of doctrinal issues: what to believe; and of practical issues: how the service should be conducted. Except for a few at the extreme High-Church end of the spectrum, members of the Church of England were united in their opposition to Roman Catholicism, which often amounted to detestation. Except for some at the extreme Low-Church end of the spectrum, members of the Church of England were united against the Protestants outside the Church: the many sects of Nonconformists or Dissenters. Before long, the question broadened in the minds of many, if not most Victorians. They were troubled not only about what to believe and how to practice their religion, but also about whether to believe at all, and how continued belief might be possible. Doubts were fostered by the advances of science, which rendered the Bible's account of creation suspect; by the advances of scholarship, which showed that the books of the Bible must have been written down at widely different times; by ethical qualms over certain Christian doctrines; by the impossibility of reconciling the concept of a wholly benevolent and all-powerful God with the doctrine of eternal punishment for sinners. There seem at times to have been as many varieties of doubt as there were human beings in Victorian England.⁸

Men and women from all areas of society were demonstrating their doubts and uncertainty in a variety of ways. If they were not rejecting religion entirely they were seeking a brand of faith more fitting to their own consciences and beliefs, often turning to a number of forms or sects before settling on a model that best fulfilled their needs. Thomas Arnold, son of the Rugby headmaster, began as an Anglican, became a doubter, turned to Roman Catholicism, back to Anglicanism and finally settled on Anglo-Catholicism, while his brother Matthew's poem "Dover Beach" serves as a seminal exploration of Victorian religious anxiety. Annie Besant also began as an Anglican before sampling a number of religious, and anti-religious, groups, including Tractarianism, Unitarianism and atheism, before finally embracing Theosophism.⁹ The poet Algernon Charles Swinburne took a more extreme position, becoming fiercely anti-Christian, because he considered that Christianity stifled the development of personality.¹⁰ Other, less volatile, members of the literary world also turned to agnosticism or to atheism. Abandoning plans to enter the Anglican ministry, Thomas

⁸ Wolff, p. 2.

⁹ Annie Besant (1847-1933) married to a clergyman at 19, they separated when she began to question church doctrine. Joined the Secular Society, gaoled for writing in favour of birth control (sentence quashed on appeal), campaigned for socialism and Indian independence.

¹⁰ See Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church: Part II*. Black, London. 1970. pp. 26-29, for these and other examples of religious/intellectual unsettlement. Swinburne's best known poem on the subject is probably "Hymn to Proserpine," (1866) infamous for line 35 "Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath".

Hardy became an agnostic in his early twenties, though he sporadically attended church services all his life and described himself as “churchy”. Leslie Stephen, who, like Hardy, had clerical ambitions, came to reject church doctrine and after much anguish determined on atheism. Stephen was only one of many Victorian intellectuals who felt the need to challenge the connection between religion and morality, arguing that moral standards need not derive from the desire to serve God to ensure one’s own salvation but from a desire to serve mankind. Reminiscent of Stephen, George Eliot had agonized over the possibility of morality without religion before determining on a humanist conclusion, informing Cambridge don Frederick Myers that, of “the three words which have been used so often as the inspiring trumpet calls of men - the words *God*, *Immortality*, *Duty* ... how inconceivable was the *first*, how unbelievable the *second*, and yet how peremptory and absolute the *third*”.¹¹

Leslie Stephen’s biographer, Noel Annan, in The Godless Victorian, believes that Stephen would have judged his “most notable achievement” as demonstrating that it was possible to live a virtuous life without believing in Christianity. He cites Stephen as declaring that, although he did not believe in the existence of God, he did not “the less believe in morality etc. etc. I mean to live and die like a gentleman if possible”.¹² Annan’s title appears to set his subject apart, suggesting that in his “Godlessness” Stephen was unique, and while it may be true that he was in many ways an exceptional individual Stephen was not *the* but only one of a significant number of “Godless Victorians”.

Like Stephen and Eliot, Linton upheld many of the moral principles that the Christian church endorsed whilst rejecting the church’s authority to prescribe social behaviour. For her, as for Eliot, duty was the dictum by which she ordered her life. In a letter written in the early 1870s Linton explained that a belief in God or in the divinity of Christ was not a prerequisite to leading a good or worthwhile life. She advised her correspondent that it was possible to:

¹¹ F W H Myers, Essays: Modern (1883) in J F C Harrison, Late Victorian Britain, Fontana, London. 1990. pp. 123-24. Like Linton, Eliot had undergone a period of adolescent religious fervour before rejecting the church; though people were much more inclined to respect Eliot for her anti-theist stance than Linton for a similar one. This was to provide yet another reason for Linton’s bitterness.

¹² Noel Annan, Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London. 1984. p. 1.

live your own life nobly - live for all that you *have* – humanity, your best sense of truth, of uprightness, of self-sacrifice, and unselfishness. Make your own brick perfect in the living temple of Society; add your own unit to the great treasury of progress and true morality, and be content to leave in the dark those things which no man yet has discovered. ... a noble life is a *fact*, and the only fact worth living for.¹³

She was however well aware that to do what was considered one's duty, to follow one's personal conscience rather than the diktat of social propriety, was very often to lead to unpleasant, even tragic consequences. (This letter also displays Linton's commitment, discussed later, to *facts*, that which is demonstrable and beyond dispute.) The potential contradictions between the forces of social propriety and individual principle is a theme that repeatedly emerges throughout Linton's writing, most often, as in The True History of Joshua Davidson, Christian and Communist, they occasion conflict that can have no satisfactory resolution.

First published in 1872 The True History of Joshua Davidson was an innovative departure from Linton's usual style and proved to be one of the most popular of her books. Quoting from a retrospective review in the Athenaeum, published after Linton's death, which described it as "an exceedingly clever pamphlet", which brought a welcome success for the author whose "popularity had waned", Layard considers it "in some respects the most remarkable of all her writings", agreeing with the reviewer that its publication, "quite altered her standing in the world of letters".¹⁴ Other readers, usually less receptive to what Linton had to say, were nevertheless impressed by Davidson, Jane Panton who reported that Linton had "snubbed her severely", and who as a consequence was not well disposed toward the author, nevertheless "learned to thoroughly enjoy and appreciate" Joshua Davidson.¹⁵ The Athenaeum article considers Joshua as, "not a creature of flesh and blood, but an exponent of the writer's views" and, while Linton said that she did not think that Joshua was "wholly right" and that the book was "simply a plea for sincerity", there is too much of Linton's early idealism in

¹³ Linton to Mr. E.K.Francis, n.d. prob. 1873-4, Layard. p. 184.

¹⁴ Layard, pp. 179-180. Linton's three previous novels, Grasp Your Nettle (1865), Lizzie Lorton of Greyrigg (1866) and Sowing the Wind (1867) had not achieved either popular or critical success.

¹⁵ Jane Ellen Panton, Leaves from a Life, Eveleigh Nash, London. 1908. pp. 136-138.

the character of Joshua not to see him as the paradigm of her ideal.¹⁶ In all her writing Linton drew at length from her own experience and it is not difficult to recognise, not only in Davidson, but in all her novels, the characters with whom she identifies and onto whom she projects her own persona. In Davidson the inquiring mind of the young Eliza Lynn is transported into the adolescent Joshua Davidson who receives the same condemnation as Linton felt she received herself.

He had a habit of asking why, and of reasoning out a principle, from quite a young lad; which displeased people; so that he did not get all the credit from the schoolmaster and the clergyman to which his diligence and good conduct entitled him. They thought him troublesome, and some said he was self-conceited; which he never was; but the more he was in earnest the more he offended them.

JD p. 6

Davidson, the only son of a Cornish carpenter is a quiet, thoughtful boy and “noticeably pious”, but following a confrontation with the aptly named Vicar Grand in which he maintains that if churchmen were true Christians “the clergy [should] live like apostles, and give what [they] have to the poor”, he makes an enemy of Grand and earns himself an unfavourable reputation as a free thinker and a democrat. Joshua gathers a group of young men around him whose aim is to live like Christ, and, denouncing the sin of luxury and “sparing no one, lay or clerical...they set their faces against the priestly class altogether”. After testing the literal truth of the Bible, and finding it wanting, Joshua concludes, “His Word is not to be accepted literally, and not to be acted on in all its details. The laws of Nature are supreme and even faith cannot change them”.¹⁷ Published the year after Darwin’s Descent of Man, and after a decade in which the implications of evolutionary theory had been widely debated in the pages of the public press, the concept of the “laws of Nature” would have been very familiar to contemporary readers. Joshua’s conclusion, that as men they “must make their own way”, confounds his followers and in narrator John’s articulation of their anxieties we can see the discursive processes which were to lead to his (and by association Linton and her fellow freethinkers’) reasoning.

¹⁶ Linton to Charles Voysey, 26 Feb. 1873, Layard, pp. 181-182.

¹⁷ Davidson p. 8, 14, 20.

We looked at each other uneasily, even the dimmest of us seeing some thing of the conclusions to which such a principle would lead us, and forecasting the rudderless wandering of souls that would ensue. ...We all felt that he had broken dangerous ground; for had we not set out with the determination to realise Christ in our lives, founded on our conviction of the literalness, the absolute uncompromising truth of every word of the Gospels? – a truth not to be explained away, or paraphrased in any manner of worldly wisdom or expediency; but to be accepted crude, naked, entire as it is set down? It was one thing or the other – Christ or society, the Bible or the world. It could not be both ...But if absolute infallibility was at an end, was that not making Christ a mere temporary teacher, local and for the day – not universal and for all time; and God a bit by bit worker? And if so, and even Gospel revelation is not final, where then exists the absolute necessity of acceptance? Yet if we came to this conclusion – sorrowfullest of all! – we must relinquish all anchorage everywhere, and do our best to piece together a theory of life for ourselves, glad if any of the broken fragments of faith might still serve us.

JD pp. 20-21

In Kirkland, although later recognising her youthful religious fervour as “sanctified egoism – believing that all the forces of heaven and hell were mainly occupied with the salvation or destruction of my one poor miserable soul,”¹⁸ Linton describes how as a young girl she came to deduce, in a typically dramatic moment, that the best and only way to truly worship Christ was to serve man with genuine humility.

While my mind was torn and tossed by these terrible questions, I was one night looking at the stars from my bedroom window, wondering at the mystery and glory of creation and speculating on our relations with the universe – when again in that same sudden way these words came to me as distinctly as if I were reading them in a printed page: ‘has God in very truth ever become man? We, the inhabitants of only one out of such countless millions of worlds – our world of a lower order of cosmic splendour than so many, and ourselves of conscious mental deficiency – why were we singled out for such a transcendent act of mercy?’ ...Then, as vividly as if I had seen Him in the body and spoken to Him face to face, I saw Christ as a peasant translated to our own time. I realised the minutest circumstances of His humanity; when a loud voice, like the rushing wind, seemed to echo from earth to sky – to fill all space and to command all time, till I was conscious of nothing but these words: ‘Man – not God; man – not God!’

CK I. p. 141

Linton’s experience is clearly mirrored in that of Joshua Davidson. The revelation that led Linton to question all that she had previously held as truth is expressed in terms of

¹⁸ Kirkland I. p. 88.

an epiphany of such magnitude that she is physically, as well as emotionally, stunned. Whilst reading Ovid's Metamorphoses she is "struck" so forcibly by the many similarities between Greek legend and stories contained in the Bible, and by the possibility that the Bible, like those legends,¹⁹ might not contain the actual truth, that:

The perspiration streamed over my face like rain, and I trembled like a frightened horse. My heart, which for a few seconds had beaten like a hammer, now seemed to cease altogether. The light grew dim: the earth was vapoury and unstable: and, overpowered by an awful dread, I fell back among the long grass where I was sitting as if I had been struck down by an unseen hand.

CK I. p. 136-7

Linton's realisation that the Bible may not be the literal truth is expressed in terms that identify it as a conversion narrative as clearly as if it were divine revelation, it is a moment of intellectual realisation so powerful she experiences it as a physical blow. Even though Linton's is intellectual and that of Maggie Tulliver spiritual, Linton's reaction recalls that of Maggie in The Mill on the Floss (1860) when, while reading Thomas à Kempis, the young heroine feels a "strange thrill of awe" which leaves her "panting for happiness and [in] ecstasy because she had found the key to it".²⁰

Linton's reference to thoughts coming to her as if she were "reading them on a printed page" is noteworthy, suggesting that subconsciously she felt that it was only by seeing her thoughts and beliefs as text that they were legitimated. This use of a thought as text metaphor is not an isolated occurrence; only a little earlier she describes the sudden thoughts that came to her with such force as to produce an intense physical response as "words which seemed to run along the page in a line of light."²¹ In an 1858 short story, "Unfinished Histories" Linton had used the same device as means of emphasising the force of a paranormal vision which came "as strongly and irresistibly as if I were reading a book", thereby stressing the integrity of the prediction.²² This apparent belief in the legitimising effect of the written word may well offer a rationale for the extreme didacticism of Linton's writing. If it were only by seeing her opinions in print that they

¹⁹ Ovid, Metamorphoses, a long narrative poem in Latin, from 1st C. BC, describing the adventures and love affairs of deities and heroes from Greek and Roman legend.

²⁰ George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss (1860) Wordsworth Classics, Ware. 1995. pp. 253-254.

²¹ Kirkland I. pp. 135-136.

²² Linton, "Unfinished Histories" National Magazine, May 1858. p. 43.

became validated then it would follow that the more emphatically they were expressed the more valid they would become. This in turn may account for the large number of Linton's friends and acquaintances who protested that Linton in person bore little relation to Linton in print. It may also offer some explanation for Linton's vast output of personal correspondence.²³

Melodramatic as Linton's thoughts and actions must appear to us in the cold light of a cynical twenty-first century there can be no doubt that for a young woman, at the dawning of the Victorian age, the daughter of an Anglican clergyman and granddaughter of a Bishop, the realisation that the Bible may not be either unique or true, must have seemed truly revolutionary, overturning all she had previously held as, literally, the gospel truth. It is also to this time that it is possible to identify the beginnings of Linton's insistence on provable truth, and her concomitant faith in science. It is also to this time that it is possible to identify the origins of her denunciation of the self-interest of established religion and what she saw as the egotism of nineteenth-century Christianity, a theme that was most fully realised in Joshua Davidson. It was not only in the characterisation and events of the book that Linton explored her conception of the self-centeredness of society.

When Vicar Grand makes it impossible for them to earn a living locally, Joshua and John resolve to leave their rural home for London to work amongst the urban poor, though not before Joshua experiences a Miltonesque vision of beleaguered humanity under the sway of "two kingly figures" ruling over the "swarming multitudes below". Joshua's vision is of "Ecclesiastical Christianity" and "Society" bound together as forbidding and oppressive tyrants, showing favour only to the well dressed rich or the subservient poor, "Believing Christians and Respectable Members of Society".²⁴ Linton concludes her somewhat heavy-handed allegory of socially sanctioned class division and religious hypocrisy that denies freedom and confounds truth by having Christ appear to Joshua in person, exhorting him to:

²³ Linton's letter-book for 1897 records that in that year her correspondence amounted to 2124 letters, Layard, p.327. An astonishing output, particularly when one considers that at the age of 76, and with failing sight and health, she was still also writing for publication.

²⁴ Davidson p. 30. For full account of Davidson's vision see Appendix I.

‘bring men back to the creed I preached. And if in securing the essence of the creed you forget the Founder, and call my doctrine by another name than mine, so be it. The world wants the thing not the label; and Christlikeness, not Ecclesiastical Christianity, is the best Saviour of men’

JD pp. 35-36

From that point it is the salvation of man upon which Joshua focuses, though his conception of how it is to be achieved places him at loggerheads with all sections of society. Forming alliances with, among others, a titled philanthropist, a Member of Parliament and political economist, middle-class social reformers, and a variety of religious groups, including Ritualists, and finding them all more concerned with preserving the status quo than with relieving the condition of the disadvantaged, he concludes that only communism holds the key to social amelioration.

While living and working among the lowest in society, setting up a night school which welcomed “thieves and drunkards, lost women and gutter children”, anybody who chose to come, with “no preaching at them for their sins; no expression of spiritual or moral superiority”, Joshua rescues his Mary Magdalene, here called Mary Princip.²⁵ She is not, it is stressed, a “soiled dove”, “whose feathers once had been white and shining” but a victim of predictable circumstance, “one of the abandoned – abandoned by society from her birth, and left to sink or swim in the foul streams of the metropolis as she best could”. Taken up at the age of fifteen by a “respectable” gentleman, a middle-aged man, “married with grown up daughters and sons, and a church warden”, Mary was well cared for until he tired of her, “as such men always do” and then she was turned out, back onto the streets she came from, with no means of support and no way of earning a respectable living.²⁶

²⁵ Joshua is not the only one of Linton’s heroes to open a similar establishment. Joshua’s is a night school, where he attempts to teach the rudiments of “cleanliness, health, good cooking, and the like.” Fullerton in Under Which Lord? founds a philosophical institute aimed at dispelling religious ‘myth.’ Both are concerned with the promotion of individual morality. Where the two institutions differ most is that while Davidson’s is truly egalitarian, welcoming “all who would come,” Fullerton’s is focused on attracting an exclusively male audience. By the 1870s a great number of associations, often on the model of working-class mutual improvement societies, had developed, offering social programmes of self-help and, crucially, moral development. M’Kay in Mark Rutherford and Elsmere in Robert Elsmere both found similar institutions.

²⁶ Davidson p. 53, 60-61. Mary Princip in Davidson, like Nancy in Dickens’ Oliver Twist (1837-1839) who was also fifteen, is redeemed by the circumstances of her death, killed, in Princip’s case, by the French authorities for helping the downtrodden Paris citizenry.

Linton was not alone in her interrogation of the cause and consequences of prostitution; the issue of prostitution and the plight of “fallen women” was one that had engaged a number of women writers and was inextricably bound up with the wider issue of the status of women in society. Mediating through the voice of the narrator, Linton is unequivocal where the responsibility for Mary’s predicament lay; it rested with the “honest and decent citizens”, whose economic and moral corruption of the most powerless in society, working-class women, created the prostitutes who in turn “made the virtuous wife [and] the chaste maiden, possible”. The bitter observation that the idyllic institution upon which the nation is founded, “the fine flower of western civilization, the rich monogamous Christian home, is planted in the filth of prostitution”, was not without a contemporary precedent.²⁷ William Acton in Prostitution (1857) had noted that the “seduction of girls [from the lower orders] is a sport and a habit with vast numbers of men, married...and single, placed above the ranks of labour”, and almost a quarter of a century later, in 1879, Josephine Butler confirmed that little had changed. In an address to a meeting of Cambridge undergraduates, later issued as a pamphlet, she asserted that licentiousness was “blasting the souls and bodies of thousands of men and women, chiefly through the guilt of the men of the upper and educated classes”, adding that it was illustrative of “the most galling tyranny of the strong over the weak”.²⁸ Narrator John in Davidson notes that the much admired “self-restraint” of gentlemen who do not marry until they can afford to support a family is built on the degradation of working-class women, the more perceptive of whom see themselves as “victims rather than criminals, the scapegoats not

²⁷ Ibid. p. 62. Mary Barton’s (1848) Aunt Esther and the disgraced farmer’s daughter Ruth (1853) signify novelist Elizabeth Gaskell’s concern and Mrs. Henry Wood’s East Lynne (1862) warns of the tragedies lying in wait for even the aristocratic fallen woman. Augusta Webster’s poem “The Castaway” (1870) is a less common example of a first person prostitute narrative; Linton uses Webster’s metaphor in describing Mary Princip as “what the world calls lost – a bad girl – a castaway”. Davidson, p. 63.

²⁸ William Acton, Prostitution, London, 1857 in J.F.C. Harrison, Early Victorian Britain, 1832-51, Fontana, London. 1979. p. 120. Josephine Butler, Social Purity: An Address, Social Purity Alliance, London. 1879, in Sheila Jeffries, The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930, Pandora, London. 1985. p. 9. Trevor Fisher in Scandal: The Sexual Politics of Late Victorian Britain, Alan Sutton Pub, Stroud, 1995, discusses the endemic nature of prostitution in mid-Victorian society, “from the aristocracy to the lumpenproletariat of London’s East End,” although he identifies at least some contemporary responses to Acton’s report as “wholly in the realm of fantasy,” particularly an editorial in the Lancet (7 Nov. 1857) which calculated that in London one in every sixteen females of all ages was engaged in prostitution, p. 9, 13.

the polluters of society”.²⁹ Ironically, given her anti-feminist reputation, in expounding the argument that it is men who are responsible for prostitution, and by emphasising the sexual double standard that colludes in male licentious behaviour whilst punishing the female objects of their licentiousness, Linton was making exactly the same points as feminist activist Josephine Butler’s courageous campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts and as J. Ellice Hopkins and the burgeoning Social Purity movement.

In Davidson prostitution is perceived primarily as a class issue, an example of Butler’s “galling tyranny of the strong over the weak”. Such class antagonism is central to the text and it is inevitable that Joshua will eventually become involved in active politics. Prefiguring the aphorism that “the personal is political” Joshua “believed in the religion of politics” and that if Christ were to return to earth it would be as a politician who would work for “the general elevation of the material condition of the masses”.³⁰ As a republican and a freethinking communist Joshua becomes a founding member of the International Working Men’s Association and in 1871 travels to France to join the Paris Commune.³¹ After the Commune’s defeat he returns, disillusioned, to England embarking on a lecturing tour in which he seeks to explain the doctrines of the Commune, communism and its apostolic origins. His talks are consistently misunderstood and prompt hostility and condemnation wherever he goes. While aware that even “very name of the Commune” acts as a “red rag to English thought”, he endeavours in vain to convey the truth “about men who tried to get the working classes equal rights and recognition with the moneyed ones”.³² Arriving in the cathedral town of Lowbridge, where Clergyman Grand now has a rich living, Joshua is faced with an already antagonistic audience brought to a frenzy by the denunciation of his old enemy.

²⁹ Davidson p. 62. One of the epithets commonly conjoined with ‘Victorian’ is ‘prudery,’ an impression that is reinforced by the founding of groups such as the Social Purity Alliance (1873), which are generally held to provide evidence of a puritanical attitude toward sex. Sheila Jeffries argues that they were primarily founded on the premise of equality, and that the moral standard should apply equally both to men and to women. Judith Walkowitz in Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women Class and the State (p. 246) states that mid-century movements were predicated on controlling female behaviour but that the later Social Purity organisations were oriented toward a male audience.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 131

³¹ The Paris Commune was the name given to the short-lived council, elected by the proletarian Central Committee of the National Guard, which sought to overthrow the French national government. The revolt was suppressed with much destruction and bloodshed, more than 20,000 people were killed and the Communards, before surrendering on May 28, 1871, destroyed a number of public buildings and killed their hostages, including the Bishop of Paris.

³² Davidson p. 154.

Encouraged by Grand's abuse, the meeting loses all restraint and Joshua is pulled from the platform. By the time order is restored, a mob, "representatives of law and order in their own minds, the champions of God and religion [who regarded] it as a sacred duty to take it out of this godless anarchist", have dragged Joshua to the floor and kicked him to death.³³ By her use of the term "mob" with its working-class connotations, Linton makes it clear that the traditional establishment position, as symbolised by Vicar Grand, continues to manipulate the ignorant lower orders for its own benefit.

Linton's real aim in Joshua Davidson was not to promote or advocate communism, as Nancy Anderson observes, Linton's philosophy owes as much to *noblesse oblige* as to Karl Marx;³⁴ rather it was to highlight what Linton saw as the hypocrisy of the nineteenth-century religious establishments and the moral and social double standards of contemporary society. Davidson is a plea for change but from within an established moral framework and a sanctioning of revolution whilst attempting to preserve social continuity. It did not profess to contain answers and its arguments are undermined by Davidson's death and the text's closing query:

Everywhere I see the sifting of competition, and nowhere Christian protection of weakness; everywhere dogma adored, and nowhere Christ realised. And again I ask, Which is true – modern society in its class strife and consequent elimination of its weaker elements, or the brotherhood of communism taught by the Jewish carpenter of Nazareth? Who will answer me? Who will make the dark thing clear?

JD p. 160

It issues a deliberately provocative challenge to its readers to resist and reject social conformity, including religious belief, and to adopt a more ethical egalitarian philosophy, while simultaneously remaining unconvinced that society is equipped to

³³ Ibid. pp. 157-158.

³⁴ Anderson, Woman against Women, p. 147. The terms Socialist and Communist were synonymous at this time. A. W. Benn confirmed that Linton was "a professed communist" although he doubted that her position was as a result of "natural conviction", rather it was the result of "temperament and accidental association". He cites a conversation on the subject in which Linton exclaimed, "I have not been Mr. Linton's wife for nothing," suggesting that it was W J Linton's influence which had the greatest significance on her political outlook. Layard, p. 201. Given the strength of Linton's convictions on other subjects it does not do her justice to attribute her political opinion to her long absent husband, nor take into consideration the ardent republicanism of her youth. Alfred William Benn, philosopher and Hellenic scholar, author of The Philosophy of Greece (1898).

pick up the gauntlet that she has thrown down for it. Later, in Kirkland she made it clear that she remained sceptical that such a situation was ever likely to come about. While she did not suggest that living by the egalitarian principles laid down in Davidson would prompt physical violence, it would nevertheless lead to public disapproval and contempt from those professing Christian belief.

Those laws of life are pure communism in system, with the widest, flattest, most loving democracy in action. But put them into practice – call your maid-servant ‘my dear,’ and shake hands with your footman; forgive an impertinence repeated as often as forgiven; allow yourself to be defrauded twice over by your needy brother who takes your cloak as well as your coat; take no thought for the morrow, but spend your principal on those who want – act out your life on the Christian plan in its integrity, and then see where you will stand, not only in relation to your own fortunes, but in relation to the respect of your fellow Christians.

CK III. pp. 154-155

To hold to religious belief, Linton asserts, is to promote inequality, encourage selfishness and impede personal and political development; in Davidson her model of Victorian Christianity serves as a metaphor of obstruction, presenting a barrier to both moral and intellectual improvement and national advance.

The Athenaeum commented in a review of the sixth edition of Davidson, the first to acknowledge Linton’s authorship, that it was a “socio-political pamphlet in the guise of a story”, an observation that could be applied to virtually all her fictional writing, and one that indicates her centrality to contemporary debate.³⁵ Given its advocacy of egalitarianism and sympathetic understanding of working class conditions it was to be expected that the greatest acclaim for Davidson should have come from political radicals and from Linton’s fellow free-thinkers; Frederick Harrison told Layard that the book afforded him “new and singular matter for reflection” and Charles Bradlaugh bought a thousand copies for distribution.³⁶ However, in the light of its promotion of

³⁵ Athenaeum, Nov. 14 1874. p. 635.

³⁶ Layard, p. 180. Frederic Harrison (1831-1923) English philosopher, jurist and critic, President of the English Positivist Committee, 1880-1905. Charles Bradlaugh (1833-1891) Social reformer, socialist and dedicated secularist, prosecuted with Annie Besant for advocating birth control. (See “Religion” n. 9) Bradlaugh was elected Liberal MP in 1880 but refused to take the oath of allegiance because it contained the words “So help me God”; he was expelled and re-elected three times before he finally took his seat in 1885.

socialism, even by another name, it is perhaps surprising that it has not received more attention as a political text. An exception is J.M. Rignall who notes that Davidson is a rare example of a work that responds to and records “the undercurrents of change” at a time when the upper stratum of the working-class was “feeling its way towards a new political awareness and an understanding of its potential role”.³⁷

The True History of Joshua Davidson not only translates Christ into Linton’s own time but also, through the voice of its innocent and ingenuous narrator, as Rignall indicates, articulates many of the intellectual dilemmas, political as well as religious, that troubled Linton and those of her contemporaries who sought to reconcile personal morality with social progress. In Kirkland, more than a decade after Davidson Linton’s growing conservatism had caused her to draw back from her previous advocacy of the methods of communism, though she nevertheless continued to admire its philosophy as morally superior, (if pragmatically unworkable) to that of any religious faith.

Our poor discredited prophets, the Communists, with their altruistic dreams of a universal Utopia, where shall be no lack and no injustice, have at least a nobler working ideal, if so fatally bad a *modus operandi*, than any which speculative theology has yet formulated. For them is no exclusiveness of favour – no heights where the beloved stand joyously in the sunshine – no hollows where the disgraced cry out to the empty night in vain – no Heaven for the lambs – no Hell for the goats – no broad lands and goodly heritage for the first-born, with banishment and dispossession for the rest; but a sweet and fruitful Elysium for all alike. Poor dreamers, and yet how human! And how far more generous than the covenanted!

CK III. pp. 141-142

Linton’s “Man – not God”, Joshua’s assertion that “men must make their own way”, and Kirkland’s defence of the humanity of Communism, while expressed in differing ways, serve to illustrate the tensions wrought between faith and doubt and the personal and social trauma that such tension could provoke.

³⁷ J.M. Rignall, “Between Chartism and the 1880s: J.W. Overton and E. Lynn Linton” in H. Gustav Klaus, The Socialist Novel in Britain, Harvester, Brighton. 1982. p. 40. Rignall argues that despite its “many limitations” Davidson “represents a bold and honest attempt to look beyond a society governed by the principles of political economy and to challenge the naturalness of the existing order”. p. 40.

II. Unsympathetic Clergymen and the Unmanliness of Religious Belief.

Joshua Davidson's eponymous hero is both forthright and dynamic. Standing in contrast to Linton's effete or self-important clergymen he is neither affected nor condescending, his bearing and beliefs are presented as natural, honest and self-effacing. Joshua was:

not learned in the scholarly way of a gentleman; not refined in the same way perhaps as a gentleman, so far as manner and little observances went; a man speaking with a provincial accent, and dressed in fustian and coarse clothes – yet he was fit to take his place with the finest gentlemen in the land...Joshua was one of the handsomest men you could see in a long summer's day; a real man; no sickly, effeminate, half-woman, but a tall, broad shouldered, deep-chested fellow, largely framed, and with that calm self-control, that steady unfeverish energy, which seemed as if it could carry the world before it.

JD pp.106-107

Linton's insistent depiction of Joshua as a natural gentleman, handsome and physically powerful, yet without personal vanity or conceit goes beyond her desire to convince the reader of the essential goodness of his moral character; his manly characteristics also emphasise his anti-religious iconoclasm. Joshua may not be learned, scholarly or refined, but he is nevertheless "gentlemanly" his chivalric qualities inextricably intertwined with his manly virtues and his masculine physicality.

A definitive definition of what constitutes a "gentleman" is hard to pin down. Anthony Trollope's much quoted observation, that it was "impossible to define what it was to be a gentleman" but "everyone knew what it meant" signifies that the attributes that identified a gentleman" were, if nebulous, largely constant.³⁸ However, just as England in the Victorian age was transformed from a rural and agricultural nation ruled by aristocratic and landed interest into an urban, commercial and industrial nation served by an emerging middle-class, so what it meant to be a gentleman was also undergoing transition. The chivalric ideals of bravery, perseverance, mannerly conduct and honour (at least toward some sections of society) remained axiomatic, but the status of the "old" gentleman was also dependent on class, wealth and education, whereas for the "new"

³⁸ Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography (1883) Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1980. p. 40. Leslie Stephen's observation that although an atheist he did not "the less believe in morality" and meant to "live and die like a gentleman" (see p. 62) supports the impression that "gentleman" was a universally understood concept.

gentleman, character and moral principles, rather than position or class were the guiding factors. The final chapter of Samuel Smiles' Self Help (1859), one of the defining documents of the age, was called "Character – The True Gentleman", its title summing up the notion of the gentleman to which Linton subscribed. Thus the "natural" gentleman, without status or education, like Joshua Davidson, or one who made his living from trade, like Leslie Crawford in Rebel, was often much more gentlemanly, and therefore masculine, than their old counterparts whose status was derived as much from exterior factors as from direct action or inherent integrity.

As her position on the woman question makes clear, Linton subscribed to the customary perception of women's nature and disposition as innately inferior to that of men. Naturally submissive and needing the influence of a higher authority, women were partial, instinctive rather than analytical, physically and emotionally vulnerable, all of which served to make them susceptible to the psychological attractions of religious belief.

It is women who fill the churches; as how should it not be, seeing that Christianity idealizes her needs, her virtues, her sentiments? The virile strength of man has no favour where her timid plasticity has all.

CK III. p.159

To subscribe to religious faith was to abandon belief in the "unchangeableness of law – which is masculine – in favour of the religious sentiment, shifting, emotional, subject to the pressure of affectation and the relief of compassion – which is feminine".³⁹ As the weaker sex, Linton accepted that women by their nature would instinctively seek an authority to which they could bow down; it was essential, as demonstrated in Sowing the Wind (1867), that women had the reassurance of a superior power in which they could place their trust. Linton has the heroine, Isola St John, outlining the attractions of Catholicism for a woman such as she, married to a weak, unstable and abusive husband.⁴⁰

³⁹ Kirkland III. p. 158.

⁴⁰ In this passage Linton is anticipating a Vatican decree of 1870 that reasserted the notion of Papal infallibility, a subject which was being hotly debated in the periodical press as Linton was writing Sowing the Wind. The name Isola emphasises the isolation and vulnerability of the character.

‘It would be pleasant to be a Catholic,’ said Isola with a certain accent of weariness in her voice; ‘all one’s difficulties would be over then, and there would be nothing to do but to obey; and obedience is easy if one is convinced that it is right.’

‘Most women feel the same want’, answered Gilbert; ‘only a few of the more exceptional sort are able to think for themselves. It is this need of direction which makes them such easy converts to Rome, where they have a man divinely appointed, and infallible, to guide and teach them’.

‘And there are times when this would be such a blessing!’ she said.

SW p.124

Linton’s meaning is clear; women whose husbands fail to provide the influence and authority that their natural limitations make essential turn to other less trustworthy agencies to provide the direction that their sex makes necessary.

Agnosticism was a masculine attribute because it was based on reason and the intellect, deriving from an internal vitality and moral fortitude that women did not possess. To hold fast to religious doctrine was to “seek strength [from] elsewhere than in our own resolve”, and so was essentially feminine because it devolved responsibility to an external authority.⁴¹ That she was an agnostic did not seem to Linton a contradictory position because she claimed for herself a degree of rationality and intellectual vigour that ordinary women did not possess; she was one of the “exceptional sort”, who could think for themselves.

That women by their nature seek a regime to which they should yield was then, for Linton, self-evident. She does not directly encourage her women readers to give up their religious faith, but in her unsympathetic representation of clergymen of all persuasions as unmanly and socially divisive she is unequivocal in signalling that both they, and the doctrines they represent, are inferior substitutes for the higher institution of home and family. For her male readers Linton’s clergymen serve as a caution against complacency and conceit, a warning of the dangers that lay in wait should they forget about the responsibility of guardianship they hold over the nation’s female population. In addition, the parade of objectionable clergy reminded male readers of what might be thought of them should they choose to enter the church.

⁴¹ Kirkland III. p. 158. For a full exposition of Linton’s rationalization of the manliness of agnosticism and the femininity of religious observance, see Appendix II.

Linton's clergymen habitually conform to one of two patterns, the first, modelled on her father, is represented by old Mr Aston the indolent and complacent, self-indulgent vicar of Crossholme, in Under Which Lord?; the second, represented by his successor Launcelot Lascelles, is physically delicate, condescending, self-serving and possessed of womanly rather than masculine attributes. The first is ineffective, the second destructive, neither model seeks to serve humanity in the way that Linton's anti-clerical men invariably do. When Linton sketches the character of the English clergyman in her father's likeness her design is rarely flattering. Vicar Lynn was "High Tory, according to his age and training" and firmly opposed to the notion of equality. She reports her father as declaring:

'I would rather see the devil himself let loose upon the earth than the Radicals get the upper hand in the country!' my father said to me one day in a paroxysm of rage, when I had rashly introduced the subject of the first Chartist petition, just then presented to Parliament.⁴²

CK I. p. 97

Vicar Grand in Davidson is clearly of the same mould. Incensed that Joshua should presume to question his ministry, Grand reminds him that:

'God has commanded you to obey your pastors and masters and all that are in authority over you; so let's have no more of this folly. Believe as you are taught, and do as you are told, and don't set yourself up as an independent thinker in matters you understand no more than the ass you drive. Go back to your place, sir, and another time think twice before you speak to your superiors.'

JD p. 10

In Patricia Kemball (1875) Linton has the boorish Jabez Hamley, Patricia's uncle, remind her, in almost the same terms, that her "duty was to be humble-minded and obedient, to order yourself lowly and reverently to all your pastors and masters, and those who are put in authority over you".⁴³

⁴² July 1839, the first of three petitions presented to Parliament. The aim of the six point Charter was to reform the parliamentary system so that it would adopt (among other points) universal male suffrage. The first petition contained one and a quarter million signatures; it was overwhelmingly rejected by the Commons 235 votes to 46.

⁴³ Patricia Kemball p. 73. Though Hamley is not a clergyman he shares many of Linton's distasteful clerical characteristics.

Davidson's narrator, John, offers the opinion that Vicar Grand was "not fit to be a parish priest". He might have made, "a fine general officer or a dignitary in a cathedral where he had nothing to do with the poor", but his condescension and haughty indifference made him "worse than useless" in an isolated rural parish.⁴⁴ Grand, like Linton's father, has:

no love for the poor and no pity: he always called them 'the common people,' and spoke of them disdainfully, as if they were different creatures from gentry. I question if he allowed us the same kind of souls; and I do know that he denied equality of condition after death, and quoted the text of 'many mansions' in proof of his theory of exclusion. He was a man of good family himself, and his wife was the daughter of a bishop.⁴⁵

JD pp. 23-24

The Rev. Mr. Birkett, father of the frosty Adelaide, in The Atonement of Leam Dundas (1876) is an amalgam of Vicars Lynn and Grand. He takes:

his income as his right, and gave his services as a grace subject only to the control of his diocesan; but he thought the souls in his charge would be neither better nor worse for the cessation of his ministrations, holding them as too wooden on one side and too brutish on the other to be much improved by what a man could say. He had a gentleman's contempt for his inferiors and the comparatively educated man's scorn of crass ignorance. Christian as he was he clung to his own interpretation of the "many mansions;" which he held to be the allotment of celestial lodgings, first floor or basement, according to present conditions: haughtily disclaiming the doctrine of equality even in Paradise.

Dundas I. pp. 15-16

Vicar Lynn and the Reverends Grand and Birkett are the political, moral and social antithesis of Joshua Davidson. They are not, despite their social status "natural gentlemen", true gentlemen neither disdain those of lesser social status nor defer to those of more prominent social position. In an earlier article for Temple Bar Linton had criticised clergyman who thought that "a little pulpit talk, glibly uttered, will stand instead of the more homely and less showy pastoral duties of visiting the sick, instructing the young and bearing with the ignorant".⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Davidson p. 23.

⁴⁵ Once again the spectre of the "bishop's daughter" raises her head.

⁴⁶ Linton, "Fuss and Feathers" Temple Bar, May 1866. pp. 198-199.

The interests of Linton's clergy lie, not in the tangible improvement of the human condition, but the veneration of what she presents as an intangible God, and their chief concern is not for the alleviation of want but for their own status. All of which signal them as hypocritical and fundamentally unchristian. By placing these bold assertions of biblical and social authority over the majority of the population into the mouths of such unsympathetic and unlikeable clergymen Linton is inviting a rebuttal of their authority to demand obedience as a right. That a person should be judged, not by what they profess to believe or by what they represent, but by what they do, was fundamental to Linton's personal philosophy. To act according to personal conscience was the central principle of her life and to follow the precepts of religion was to abdicate responsibility for one's own actions.

Less concerned with status and more with ennui, Alick Corfield is martyred by his unspoken love for Leam Dundas, and as a result enters the clergy as "second best" to the more natural option of marriage. Brought up "tied to his mother's apron strings", shielded from the outside world and fed on "moral pap" he is in consequence "more of a woman than a man". He seeks solace in the Church because he lacks the motivation to do otherwise. While Linton allows his goodness and constancy he nonetheless lacks both intellectual and physical vigour; full of "vague resolves" that have "no more meaning in them than the random moves of a bad chessplayer", and without the fortitude or resolve to overcome his lassitude, Corfield is offered as an example of Linton's unmanly clergyman.⁴⁷

The association of Christian worship with physical weakness and "womanliness" was one that was not uncommon in the latter half of the nineteenth century and it was a perception of which Linton took full advantage. Her anti-clerical and agnostic men, such as Joshua Davidson, and Richard Fullerton and Ringrove Hardisty in Under Which Lord?, are invariably "manly" men, physically and mentally vigorous, good-looking and principled, they epitomise the popular notion of model masculinity. In contrast, those of her male characters who hold clerical office or who have religious proclivities are habitually lacking in masculine traits. Men such as Cuthbert Molyneux in Under Which

⁴⁷ Dundas II. p. 147, 219, 236. The responsibility for Alick Corfield's "womanly" character is firmly laid at the feet (or rather the apron) of his mother; Mrs Corfield too was a bad mother.

Lord?, who “had rather mistaken his vocation in being a man at all” and Alick Corfield in Dundas, with his love of wild flowers, or pale and tearful on his sickbed, represent feminised men for whom Linton professed a personal detestation.

It was partly in response to texts such as Linton’s, with their literary representations of effeminate clergymen, that Thomas Hughes was prompted to write The Manliness of Christ (1879). Published in the same year as Under Which Lord? in The Manliness of Christ Hughes strove to refute the association of Christianity with weakness, which he admitted was a belief prevailing in contemporary society. He writes that there had been proposals to found a new (men’s) Christian association whose members were to be drawn from young men displaying physical courage or prowess; championship rowers, runners and wrestlers were to be especially welcome. These young men, representative of a revival and extension of the notion of muscular Christianity, were to go as missionaries to the “more savage and violent areas” of industrial northern England, areas where other Christian associations (the Young Men’s Christian Association was named specifically) were failing to reach that class which “most needed Christian influences”.⁴⁸ Hughes admits that there was a widespread feeling that existing associations, “did not cultivate individual manliness in their members, and that this perception was closely connected with their open profession of Christianity”.⁴⁹ He admits that Christian associations were thought to “lack manliness” and that this was derived from their active religious involvement. There was, he said, a distinct belief that this “weakness” [want of manliness] was:

inherent in our English religion, that our Christianity does appeal and must appeal habitually and mainly to men’s fears - to that in them which is timid and shrinking, rather than that which is courageous and outspoken.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Muscular Christianity - strong minded and strong bodied faith that fits a man for the battle of life. Clergyman, poet, novelist and Christian Socialist, Rev. Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) was a founder and forceful exponent of the notion of Anglican vigour, the term ‘muscular Christianity’ was applied to his teaching, even though he was as concerned with social action as personal fortitude.

⁴⁹ Thomas Hughes, The Manliness of Christ (1879) Macmillan, London. 1907. p. 1. Nor was this a purely nineteenth century attitude. Joan Smith in “Patum Peperium” Misogynies, Vintage, London. 1996. p.70 recalls an article in the Independent (23 Feb. 1987) that refers to the stereotype of a camp anglo-Catholic curate. The Roman Catholic priests that inhabited the Craggy Island of Channel 4 Television’s “Father Ted” comedy series conform to the comic stereotype of Catholic clergy as variously, dissolute, devious, effeminate or congenitally stupid.

⁵⁰ Hughes, pp. 2-3.

While denying the connection between weakness and worship, Hughes is nevertheless forthright in his encouragement of the nation's youth to demonstrate their Christian manliness. After setting out in his text the ways in which it can be demonstrated that Christ himself was manly, Hughes then reproduces an address he had recently given at one of the country's leading colleges. In a jumble of sporting and martial analogies and the conventional metaphor of life as a journey, he allows that the young men before him will face many trials of faith, but by "holding hard" with masculine strength and endurance, "even in this hard materialistic nineteenth century", they will succeed in making the world a better place for them having been in it. Life is a "great battlefield" in which the vigorous youth of the coming generation, "shouldering musket and knapsack", will make the transition to adult life, passing through the "golden gates" to manhood; faced with the "dust and jar, heat and strain of the mighty highway", the path may be "hard to find" and "steep to climb" but will ultimately lead to salvation.⁵¹ Hughes' metaphor of life as a battle was not novel: hymns such as "Onward Christian Soldiers"(1865) and "Fight the Good Fight"(1863) also emphasised Christianity as an aggressive and dynamic force and Christian men as vigorous and commanding.

Hughes' own "trials of manliness" are exacting; loyalty, endurance and devotion to duty are central, as is self-restraint and "surrender of the will", but most important of all is commitment to the truth. "When a man *or woman* is called to stand by what approves itself to their consciences as true, and to protest for it through evil report and good report, against all discouragement and opposition from those they love and respect" (my emphasis) that represents "the most searching of all trials".⁵² Hughes' definition of manliness clearly equates with that of Linton, her representations of Richard Fullerton in Under Which Lord? and of Joshua Davidson, correspond entirely to his model of the manly ideal. Interestingly Hughes seems to be suggesting that in his pattern for manliness it is also possible for women to possess manly attributes without deviating

⁵¹ Hughes, "An Address Delivered at Clifton College, Sunday Evening" October 1879," Ibid. pp. 77-78.

⁵² Ibid. p. 17. Robert Baden-Powell, Victorian military hero, founded the Boy Scout movement (1908) to encourage the same principles. The attraction for girls became apparent in 1909 when the first big Scout rally was held at the Crystal Palace, more than ten thousand boys attended, six thousand girls also turned up, prompting the start of the Girl Guides, (1910).

from the womanly norm, a situation that Linton claimed for herself, though not one she allowed her heroines.⁵³

In an article for The Queen, Linton drew her ideal clergyman unequivocally from Hughes' paradigm; he is so faithful an ally of Tom Brown as to be a metaphorical, if not a literal schoolmate. As "The Lady's Newspaper" The Queen could not be expected to advocate agnosticism and Linton as a working journalist wrote for her market; nevertheless Linton's "Our Vicar" is as un-ecclesiastical as it was feasible for her to make him. He is, in the mould of Hughes and Kingsley, "essentially masculine in his own nature", countenancing "neither mysteries nor affectation". He is a man of action who values not the word but the deed, "righteousness acted rather than professed". His children are taught "to tell the truth without fear; to bear disappointment without temper, and bodily pain without tears...They would be ashamed to whine or fret, to filch or lie, to be greedy here and timid there, like other pampered little masters and misses". As a young man "Our Vicar" served in Africa, living "as a man among men" he knows what it is to work hard, to be "brave in the presence of danger", to:

defend his own life and his employer's property, to be assailed by the temptations which assail the young, the unguarded, the prosperous, and to come out victorious over all – thanks to the strength which preferred a good conscience to self-indulgence, and present loss to future shame.⁵⁴

He is, in short, Linton's very ideal of English manhood, excepting the circumstance of his priestly vocation, of which Linton makes as little as is practicable. "Our Vicar" best serves his parishioners not as a priest *per se*, but as an exemplar of moral superiority, his religious office an addendum to his honourable life. The article concludes with only a brief reference to its subject's ministry, as far removed from its theological foundations as possible; together with a customary Lintonesque taunt at both High and Low Church

⁵³ In "An address Delivered at Clifton College" Hughes exhorts the boys to hold steadfastly to their ideals; perhaps in response to an increasingly secular society, Hughes seems to be suggesting that if one lives a "brave, simple, truthful life" putting aside "evil habits" then one will always be a good faithful Christian, even if one does not profess a faith, because idealism comes from God - whether you believe in him or not - an ambiguity worthy of Linton herself.

⁵⁴ Linton, "Our Vicar" The Queen, Oct. 25, 1879. p. 376. Linton's "Vicar" bestrides the years between Hughes' Tom Brown's Schooldays (1857) and the martial patriotism of Henry Newbolt's "He Fell Among Thieves" (1897) and "Vitaï Lampada" (1897).

practices and the “unknowable” will of God. (The inconceivability of the “will” of God translating into the inconceivability of his existence.)

While such ministrations as his are in the ascendant we, the laity, are assured against both bigotry and superstition, both ignorance and tyranny, both the hysterical excitement of evangelism in excess, and the unworthy practices borrowed from another communion. We have, instead of all this, a manly, simple and sincere religion which makes us better citizens, braver men and purer women – which carries us direct to God, as the Father whom we all worship, and whose will, if we but knew it, we would all do our best to obey.⁵⁵

Like Hughes’ muscular Christian, “Our Vicar’s” Broad Church liberality and his masculine vigour both signify him as inherently English (although Linton’s ideal Englishman would eschew religious belief entirely). He certainly would not concede an authority higher than personal conscience or a cause more important than the moral, intellectual and material well-being of the nation. In representing the clergy as allowing a greater authority than individual moral principle, Linton suggests that religious belief undermines both personal and national autonomy, subverting the concept, as laid down in Davidson, that “men must make their own way”. In characterising religious men as effeminate or “womanly” she is drawing attention to the notion that they stand at variance with traditional views of what constitutes an appropriate Englishman. In her representations of Roman Catholicism Linton then extends this judgement, suggesting that as a faith it further undermines the integrity of the nation by introducing a morally and sexually predatory, and foreign, presence into the heart of English society. Religion endangers the “sacred” institution of home and family, Roman Catholicism more so.

Extreme as Linton’s views may seem to us now, and they were just as extreme to some of her more liberal-minded contemporaries at the time, she was nevertheless giving voice to opinions with which many of her generation concurred, even if they did not articulate them.

⁵⁵ Linton, “Our Vicar” p. 376. Linton’s characterisation also carries the divisive double standard that men should be brave and women should be pure.

III. Anti-Catholicism and Religious Belief as a Threat to Social Stability.

In 1848, when the twenty-six year old Eliza Lynn met Dr. Edward MacDermot it was love at first sight, and he was to be “the one great passion of her life”.⁵⁶

It was a thing that came at first sight on both sides, a sudden recognition of affinity for which neither was responsible and which neither could resist. We were made for each other. Each was the half which together made the completed human being.

CK II. p. 218

However, as was discussed earlier, both recognised from the outset that their relationship was hopeless. Acknowledging that their principles brought them to an impasse that could never be satisfactorily resolved they eventually parted, leaving Linton with an enduring sense of loss that was to stay with her all her life. As she describes her distress her bitterness and sense of animosity toward the church is palpable, serving to fuel her already well-entrenched anti-religious stance.

Christ and the Church were victorious; and there were only two desolate hearts the more, and one ruined life, to add to the count of the martyrs made by Faith and denial.

CK II. p. 241

The hostility of her feelings toward the church intensified across the intervening years, emerging time and again in her novels and essays as anti-clerical, and especially anti-Catholic sentiment, in which adherents to the truth, no matter how painful, emerged as those text’s most heroic figures. However, although her hostility toward Roman Catholicism was certainly driven by the failure of her relationship with MacDermot, her anti-Catholic antipathy, which was most overt in Under Which Lord? was by no means atypical of her time. Linton’s out-spoken opposition was in many ways the outward manifestation of the underlying attitude of many of her contemporaries, part of a long

⁵⁶ Layard. p. 74. Layard refers to MacDermot by Linton’s pet name for him, “Brother Edward”. His identity is known through Linton’s will in which she left him some small bequests.

tradition of anti-Catholic sentiment that experienced a revival in the mid-nineteenth century, provoked in part by the development of Tractarianism.⁵⁷

Veneration of the Virgin Mary and the claims of the authority of the church over personal and social institutions were two of the tenets that most clearly divided Broad Church Anglican and High Church Catholic and which roused most suspicion and enmity against Catholicism in Victorian England, enmity that is particularized in Under Which Lord? Robert Wolff asserts that it is “astonishing that so crude a novel” as Under Which Lord?, “reminiscent of the great anti-Jesuit scare and the fiction of the fifties – could have appeared so late as 1879”, though he does concede that the “old-fashioned bogeyman” of anti-ritualism had been reawakened at that time, and that Linton may captured something of the mood of the moment.⁵⁸

Public hostility had been revived by the 1877 publication of The Priest in Absolution, a High Anglican handbook for use by the members of the Society of the Holy Cross, which offered advice on the most fruitful methods of assisting women in confession. (It is probable that it was this publication and the debate it provoked that later helped inform Linton’s description of Hermione’s first confession.) However, as the Home Secretary, R.A Cross, had told Parliament that the handbook should be proceeded against as an obscene publication, and one Evangelical clergyman had advocated capital punishment for any Anglican who heard confessions, perhaps the anti-Catholic

⁵⁷ The influential fellows of Oriel College, Oxford, Keble, Pusey, Newman and Froude, who together founded what was to become known in the 1830s as The Oxford Movement, argued for a reassertion of High-Church Anglican practice which for many more conservative Anglicans was tantamount to Romanism and which split the Anglican church. Newman’s conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1845 did not dispel Anglican fears. This theological conflict was to add fuel to the fire of religious dispute and provided a locus of conflict in Under Which Lord? with which Linton’s readers would be instantly familiar. Keble et. al., together with a number of other leading churchmen published a series of pamphlets and monographs, Tracts For The Times (1833-1841) which were to have a profound influence on theological debate, and which earned their writers the designation ‘Tractarian’ a term that was to enter the lexicon to denote an adherent or promoter of Catholicism; this promotion was seen to include, and focus on, the establishment of Catholic ritual, hence Ritualism.

⁵⁸ Wolff, pp. 192-3. In an essay for the Westminster Review in 1852 George Eliot had criticized the class of women writers who aimed at a “didactic effect by an inflated style...and melodramatic incident” and her later “Silly Novels by Lady Novelists” (Westminster Review Oct. 1856) condemned “oracular” novels by women who were “rarely diffident about their ability to decide on theological questions” and whose heroines confounded “Deists, Puseyites and ultra-Protestants” by their particular (Broad Church) view of Christianity. Thomas Pinney, Essays of George Eliot, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London. 1963. p. 301, 310-311.

sentiments in Under Which Lord? were not as extreme as Wolff suggests.⁵⁹ Indeed, between 1850 (the year which saw the restoration of Catholic bishops in England) and 1890 there was much public agitation and litigation designed to curb what many perceived as the Catholicisation of English religious life. Itinerant preachers toured the country holding anti-Catholic meetings that often ended in violent demonstrations and occasional reprisals from the Catholic community. In Parliament speeches were made and Acts passed designed to curb the spread of Ritualism and the ecclesiastical courts moved to censure dissident Anglican clergy. Clearly the “bogeyman” of anti-Catholic feeling had never truly been absent from society and the publication of Under Which Lord? rather than inflaming public opinion, merely served to heap one more coal onto an already blazing pyre.⁶⁰

Public suspicion of Catholicism notwithstanding, Under Which Lord? proved to be a contentious text. Its hostile reception caused Linton no surprise, she had anticipated even as she was writing it, an unfavourable critical response. In a letter to her sister Lucy she had written that she believed her new book was “going to make a noise, but you will not like it. No orthodox person will. I cannot help that! I must write according to my conscience, and I will take the blame and bear the brunt when it comes in consequence”.⁶¹

In Under Which Lord? Hermione Fullerton, the loving wife of the manly, freethinking Richard and mother of the ethereal Virginia, is drawn under the influence of the new vicar of the parish of Crossholme, Launcelot Lascelles, to the destruction of all that she

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 193. Also E R Norman, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England, George Allen & Unwin, London. 1968. pp. 84-5, 109.

⁶⁰ Two of the most notorious riots took place in London in 1860 and Birmingham in 1867. These were reminiscent of the 1780 anti-Catholic Gordon riots made familiar in Dickens’ Barnaby Rudge (1841). It is probable that anti-Catholic feeling was in part a manifestation of racial as well as religious tension. Most immigrants from Ireland were Catholic (between 1840 and 1890 the Catholic population of England and Wales doubled to 1.4 million) their arrival in urban areas was often seen as a threat to the employment of indigenous unskilled labour, thus among the working class there was much resentment of all things pertaining to the Irish, including their religion. The 1874 Public Worship Act was passed specifically to “put down Ritualism” which Disraeli declared was “Mass in masquerade”. Hansard, ccxxxi p. 76-82 (15 July, 1874) As late as 1889 the Bishop of Lincoln, Edward King, was prosecuted for encouraging and performing illegal i.e. Ritualist acts, during the Celebration of the Eucharist in divine service, although by that time there was, aside from fanatics high and low, little public concern over the offence or the outcome. Norman. pp. 84-85, 109-110, 229-232.

⁶¹ Linton to Mrs. Lucy Gedge, Nov. 1878, Layard, p. 213.

belatedly comes to realise is most precious in her life. The theme of the text is clear from the naming of the parish, the tension between church, as symbolised by the cross, and home and family; the verb, to cross, suggesting the forthcoming impediments to happy domestic life. Linton was not blind to the significance of its name, although she does not acknowledge that it is indicative of conflict within a closed, domestic locale, maintaining that it was “entirely ecclesiastical”. Formerly under church ownership, the entire area, “a well-favoured land which the Church had once called its own, and which was now held by usurpers and heretics”, serves both symbolically and literally as the site of a wider conflict between religious and secular authority.⁶² Nor was Linton unaware of the power which could be invested in a name, as is apparent as she has Launcelot Lascelles cynically congratulating himself on the nuances of his own forename.

He even understood that a romantic name like his – a name savouring of chivalry and knighthood and sentimental romanticism, and thus uniting the splendour of the man with the religious authority of the priest – was a small point in his favour; at least with women who need to have their imagination warmed as much as the average man demands that his reason should be satisfied.⁶³

Under Which Lord? was not the first time that Linton had invoked the notion of ancient chivalry. In Joshua Davidson Joshua was said to come “from the decayed branches of an ancient family – some said dating from King Arthur’s self”. Joshua himself believed in the connection and his life exemplified the quiet heroism and innate compassion associated with the ancient chivalric code.⁶⁴ In contrast, Lascelles, whose name evoked visions of old world gallantry, in reality represents the antithesis of the Arthurian idyll. The choice of Lascelles’ forename brings to mind Tennyson’s image of Sir Lancelot in his Idylls of the King (1859-1885) The introduction of evil in the person of Lancelot into the untarnished kingdom of Camelot, to the destruction of marital bliss, is a persuasive comparison to the entry of Lascelles into the Fullertons’ seemingly perfect world. It was Linton’s original intention to call the novel Under Which King? the name

⁶² Under Which Lord? I. pp. 58-59. The similarity between the name of Lascelles’ parish of Crossholme and Linton’s father’s parish of Crosthwaite, is also notable, particularly in the light of the domestic disorder of the Lynn household.

⁶³ Ibid. I. p. 60.

⁶⁴ Davidson p. 5.

by which it first appeared in serialised form in the Gentleman's Magazine. Either title effectively illustrates both the premise at the heart of the text, that it is not possible to serve two masters, and its underlying supposition, that women, as a consequence of their innate vulnerability must have a "lord and master" to guide and command them.

Prosperous, with little to keep her occupied and few shared interests with her agnostic husband, the indolent Hermione is ripe for distraction and falls easy prey to the seductions of the suave young priest. The sensual Lascelles, "one of the most advanced of the ritualistic party, with clear and well-defined views on the power of the priesthood and the submission of the laity", recognises that with little to divert her other than "jewels, furbelows and flounces," Mrs Fullerton is unconsciously weary of her idle lifestyle and he sets out to persuade her that only through religious devotion can her real duty be fulfilled.⁶⁵ Under the terms of her father's will Hermione has become the reluctant owner and heiress to her family's wealth and property, though as a devoted wife, she vows:

amidst tears and caresses that nothing should ever make her act on the provisions of a will so unjust as this, or accept the undeserved place of superior assigned to her. Richard was her lord, as all husbands should be to loving wives; and what she was in name he should be in fact.

UWL I. p. 6

She devolves stewardship to her husband but remains title-holder of the estate, making her especially attractive to the shrewd Lascelles. By asserting both sexual and psychological influence he can achieve a double victory, gaining control over her money and property to use as his own *and* bringing about the downfall of her "infidel" husband. Employing imagery of Hermione Fullerton as a commodity to be exploited, she is described as:

unoccupied ground waiting only the hand of the tiller. What then might not be done with one whose life was rusting for the want of using? Religious enthusiasm, all the more potent because new; the constant occupation given by the church; the pleasant fluttering of the female spirit, found in submission to a new direction, a new influence, a new love if you will, which the conscience approves and which neither the husband nor society can condemn... ...all this

⁶⁵ Under Which Lord? I. p. 26.

would give her the new interest, the passionate life that she needed, and make her his plastic instrument.

UWL I. p. 63-4

The expression “superior” with its Roman Catholic associations and its connotations of domination and control, is significant; it is Lascelles who assumes the role, and the title of “Superior” and it is by this name that Hermione and her daughter refer to him in their conversations together. In Davidson the young Joshua, still in a quest to determine his own personal doctrine, also encounters a High Church Superior. However, although Joshua is attracted to the sensuous experience of Ritualism, he rejects its dogma as irrational, and the arguments of its spokesman as antithetical. The High Church’s:

elaborate system of symbolism seemed to him puerile; a playing with spiritual toys that had less reality than ingenuity ... their assumption of a priesthood possessing unproved and mysterious powers, failed to convince him.

‘You have captivated my heart’ he one day said to the Superior – ‘you charm my tastes – you delight my imagination; but you have not mastered my reason.’

JD p. 41

The High Church Superior in Joshua Davidson, although more sympathetically portrayed than Lascelles, is no less hypocritical as he asks, in a question that echoes that which challenged Linton in her relationship with MacDermot and prefigures that faced by Fullerton, “Cannot you quell that questioning spirit of yours for the sake of the Church’s honour and to maintain a close front?” The answer he receives is the answer of them all; as Joshua replies that he is “not able to stifle individual conscience for any considerations of party strength” he is representing Linton’s ideal of egalitarian conscience.⁶⁶

The Fullertons are not the only family to be subject to Lascelles’ influence, the Molyneux family, also among the *ton* of the neighbourhood, fall sway to his power. The unworldly and effeminate Cuthbert Molyneux lately returned from Cambridge with a moderate degree and a reputation for “romantic Ruskinism”, is a “convert ready made”. His sister Theresa, “an enthusiast, warm and devoted”, and their Aunt Catherine, “gushing, weak, and with no more reasoning faculties than a child”, all fall under the

⁶⁶ Davidson p. 42.

spell of the charismatic priest, and each of them meet an unseemly end.⁶⁷ Aunt Catherine loses her senses, degenerating into confusion and senility, she converts to Roman Catholicism, finally entering a convent as “an imbecile, good-natured nun, who saw visions and dreamed dreams that never crept beyond the convent walls.”⁶⁸ Cuthbert Molyneux, singled out as Crossholme’s future curate, becomes intoxicated with the trappings and ceremonials of high-church ceremony, eventually taking the final step toward Rome, literally and figuratively, converting to Roman Catholicism and joining a Catholic brotherhood in the Holy City; while Theresa Molyneux’s passion and sexual desire for Lascelles are transmuted into a compulsive spiritual obsession, leading to mental and physical illness and her eventual agonized death.

The name Theresa, chosen by Linton for the woman she depicts as consumed and destroyed by repressed sexual desire is a revealing choice, recalling the story of St Teresa and its famous depiction by Bernini, “The Ecstasy of St. Theresa”, housed in the Conaro Chapel of the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, in Rome, the city in which Linton was living for at least part of the time she was writing Under Which Lord? Bernini’s “Ecstasy” represents the moment in which Saint Theresa’s heart is pierced by the spear of an angel. This sculpture, depicting the saint with her head thrown back, clothes in disarray, her breast penetrated by the lance of a muscular, semi-clad messenger of God, is widely interpreted as a representation of spiritual rapture expressed through heightened sexual excitement. In her autobiography, Libro de la Vida (1562) St. Theresa describes this spiritual union as a mystical marriage, an example of a divine consummation of the sort that Theresa Molyneux most profoundly desires, a longing for which ultimately consumes her.⁶⁹

Linton’s depiction of Theresa’s illness is a persuasive representation of religious mania and what would now be recognised as a form of hysterical anorexia nervosa.

⁶⁷ Under Which Lord? I. pp. 64-65. The reference to “Ruskinism” may have been to suggest aestheticism; or rather more covertly (given the grounds for Ruskin’s divorce (non-consummation) and his relationship with the, then late, Rose La Touche) it may have been a reference to Molyneux’s anodyne sexuality.

⁶⁸ Ibid. III. p. 306.

⁶⁹ St. Theresa, in contrast to Theresa Molyneux, was, as her depiction by Bernini suggests, an active and vital figure, neither submissive nor dominated. Given Linton’s misinterpretation of “Dives and Lazarus” (see p. 94) it is possible that her choice of the forename Theresa is merely coincidental, although the evidence suggests that she was particular when it came to naming her characters. Also, given she was resident in Rome at the time, and a keen sightseer, it is likely she was familiar with the sculpture.

Theresa adored him as a God who could bless, whose worship was in itself ecstasy and whose service was its own reward. ... Without his words of encouragement, his smile of approval, his council, his very remonstrance – ah! how well she knew that tender joy of the loving who kiss the rod by which they are chastised! ... Theresa touched the confines of insanity in her now ecstasy, now despair; and her very life was consumed by the fervid passion with which she made love to a man under the form of serving the Church and worshipping God.

UWL II. pp. 247-8

She fasts to the point of debility and unfailingly attends every service until both her mental and physical health is destroyed, but “she could not give it up”.

She could not bring herself to renounce her holy imprudences, more especially that of attendance at the offices. Her highest moment of happiness was when she could see that beloved priest standing between her and the Divine – himself to her the Divine; when she could hear his voice; let her soul be carried as it were in the arms of his spirit up to the gates of heaven by his prayers; and take her especial share of the benediction which had so much more significance when given by him than by any other; when she could pour out her love and call it a now a hymn and now a prayer.

UWL II. p. 249

After she gives way to a hysterical fit whilst in church, Lascelles resolves to send her away, the ostensible reason is that she may recover her health. In reality he believes that the sacrifice of her health for the glory of the church is a price worth paying; it is to prevent his own discomfiture that she must be removed.

Her presence at the services embarrassed him in more ways than one. Those dangerously bright eyes fixed on him with such intensity when he was performing the most sacred functions of his holy office disturbed his thoughts, distracted his attention, and filled him with dread of what might come. Her tempestuous tears now distressed, now irritated him; her self-accusations of imaginary sins, to excuse the hysterical passion which she could not control, taxed his ingenuity to soothe with becoming gravity and tenderness combined; her despair when he checked her over-zeal, her perilous exaltation when he encouraged, perplexed his powers of management; and he was anxious to remove from the place one whose religious ardour was so evidently the mere cloak for the disorders of human passion.

UWL II. p. 251

Moreover, Linton suggests that in his ambition for converts to his religious cause it is not the first time that Lascelles has provoked this reaction in a female devotee, and that

it had always “ended in the sacrifice of those poor victims and his own gain”.⁷⁰

Hermione and Theresa are not the only women on whom he focuses his attention, but as the richest and most influential they are the ones through whom Lascelles can achieve the greatest gain. He understands “to the fullest, the value of women as helpers as well as subjects”, and flirts in the name of the church, with all his female parishioners, until they are half in love with him, their devotion becoming translated into religious fervour and ritualistic worship.⁷¹ In Lascelles’ domain women are reduced to a commodity, their value lies not in their persons or their individuality but the use to which they can be put.

Linton’s implication is unequivocal; the weak, the irrational and the vulnerable are easily taken in by the artifice of the church and its representatives. In her world the church serves to undermine rather than uphold the institution of the family, destabilising and ultimately destroying the foundations of British upper middle-class society.

Linton’s description of the degradations of the Molyneux family represents a two-fold warning; primarily they alert her readers to the challenge that Ritualism presents to social stability, but also afford a vision of the fate of a family without secure foundations. Further, as the events of Under Which Lord? demonstrate, even the strong, the seemingly well protected and the rational can fall victim to the manoeuvrings of the unscrupulous churchman.

Before the arrival of Lascelles both Hermione and her daughter Virginia give “unquestioning obedience” to Richard Fullerton as husband and father, not because he demands it, but because by his position, his natural authority and by custom it was his right. He repeatedly calls Hermione “wife” as a loving term of endearment and the highest accolade with which he can endow her, and congratulates himself as he appraises the worth of his possession.

Good, faithful wife! How thoroughly at that moment he realized her steadfastness, her loyalty: and how warmly he recognized his own good fortune in possessing her!

UWL.I. p. 29

⁷⁰ Under Which Lord? II. p. 251.

⁷¹ Ibid. I. p. 60.

To the modern reader the concept of possession carries distasteful implications of ownership, but for Linton it was not a question of whether Hermione should belong to anyone or not, that she was a possession was axiomatic, it was a question of to whom should she belong. The irony that her wifely attributes of faithfulness and loyalty are to be put to the test and found wanting is not lost. In addition, despite Linton's sympathetic portrayal of Fullerton and her possible identification with his character, her ironic warning against his complacency is clear, and lest the cautionary lesson be obscured, is restated throughout the text.

Torn between wifely obedience to her husband and submission to the church Hermione suffers agonies of indecision over where her true allegiance should lie, but there is also a *frisson* of unacknowledged sexual excitement as Lascelles affects an attitude of domination over her that hitherto only her husband had held. She feels:

an odd fluttering at her heart, giving to another man than her husband the same unquestioning obedience, the same womanly submission that had marked her life with him. How strange it was to have this new authority over her – shadowy, subtle, vague, as it yet was! but it was pleasant in spite of its strangeness.

UWL.I. p. 90

Eliza Linton was well aware of the attractions of the trappings and practice of high-church ceremonial and even confessed a certain “feeling of tenderness for the Roman Catholic ritual”.⁷² Even though for her the attraction went no further her depiction of the female characters in Under Which Lord? unmistakably demonstrates her understanding that fervent religious observance may be symptomatic of a vague and undefined longing experienced by even the most privileged women in society. Throughout the text we are made aware, albeit obliquely, of the sensual attractions of high-church worship: the chanting of the Litany, the heady aroma of incense, the colours, forms and ceremonials, the receiving of the sacrament and the procedures of confession, all the rituals of religious adoration engage the senses of Linton's female devotees. These women may remain unaware of the underlying sexuality of their situation, but as readers we do not.

⁷² Kirkland II. p. 234. In an earlier article Linton had discussed the rich symbolism of church trappings and ritual, an understanding of which, even for non-believers who “hold that the time for all this has passed,” will keep us from “ignorant contempt”. The implication being that contempt should be based on reason not instinct. “Ecclesiastical Symbolism” Temple Bar, Jan. 1867. p. 260.

The Victorian reading public were adept interpreters of literary allusion, the era was after all the one that not only saw the flowering of the “great” English novel but also the immense popularity of “lesser” forms of fiction such as sensation, and later, new woman fiction, redolent with sensual imagery. It has been noted that woman sensation writers “invite[d] their readers to join in a process which involves active construction of meaning”, rather than passively absorbing without interpretation. Flint’s trenchant observation that within the sensation genre the reader is, “habitually acknowledged as possessing a wider, more subtle interpretive system than that granted to the heroine”, may be extended to acknowledge the interpretive skills of the Victorian reader *per se*.⁷³ After all, the detective novel, as exemplified by Wilkie Collins’ The Moonstone, has its roots in Victorian sensation fiction, and crucially - the success of the story depends on it - engages the interpretive and analytical skills of its reader.

In a character sketch of Linton by her friend A.W. Benn, he records that she possessed a “vein of childlike innocence” that was perhaps surprising given her literary reputation. (He offers as an example Linton’s mistaking the “sweet-faced ladies” in Bonifazio’s “Dives and Lazarus” as the subject’s wife and sister-in-law, whereas they were in fact Venetian courtesans. Benn says that when he pointed out her mistake Linton was “simply delighted with herself for not suspecting the truth”).⁷⁴ Given Benn’s appraisal of Linton’s occasional naivety, although he does admit it only rarely showed itself in print, it might of course be possible that Linton was unaware of the sexual implications of her writing, though given the criticism she received for the unseemliness of much of her work it seems much more probable that she was well aware of the erotic undertones implicit in much of her writing.⁷⁵ Like Benn, Robert Wolff also supposes that Linton was unconscious of the sexual nuance of her work, he assumes that she did not realize “the extent to which the Ritualists depended upon sensuous impressions”, although a

⁷³ Kate Flint, The Woman Reader: 1837-1914, Clarendon, Oxford. 1995. pp. 192-193. The Victorian language of flowers, which formed an alternative and often highly nuanced means of personal communication, demonstrates that it was not only in the intricacies of literary allusion that the Victorian public proved themselves skillful interpreters.

⁷⁴ A.W. Benn in Layard, pp. 197-8.

⁷⁵ Realities (1851) contained scenes of a sensual nature that she refused to cut. Anderson notes a letter from Linton to the publisher George Bentley encouraging him to accept Patricia Kemball for publication, with the assurance (despite it containing murder and near incest) that it was an “innocent kind of book” and “eminently safe”. Women against Women, p. 150. Stabbed in the Dark (1885) was concerned with adultery, illegitimacy and murder.

reading of Under Which Lord? does make this assertion difficult to defend.⁷⁶ Not only does Linton acknowledge the sensual appeal of Ritualistic worship but she is also daringly forthright about its underlying sexuality. The sexuality, both real and imagined, of Catholicism, was a well established feature of the gothic novel, most popularly exemplified by Matthew Lewis' The Monk (1796), a highly charged tale of religious ambition and sexual temptation within a monastic setting, which spawned many imitators, a substantial following and an enduring appeal. Walter Scott declared that The Monk was so popular "it seemed to create an epoch in our literature", the conventions of which Linton drew heavily from in Under Which Lord?⁷⁷

The description of Hermione Fullerton's first confession is couched, not in spiritual terms, but in terms of physical submission and conquest. She is bound, willing yet unwilling, to surrender to the priest's command as he declares his authority over her. Hermione's confession, and the priest's absolution, marks a turning point in the text as her commitment to Lascelles surpasses that to her husband. As she is forced, both metaphorically and literally to her knees, the image of sexual domination is compelling. Lascelles, as he claims mastery over her, assumes a dark, almost devilish form, and Hermione terrified yet fascinated, is overcome by an emotional response that she finds overwhelming.

He rose from his chair, and stood towering above her. ... There was nothing of the courtly courteous gentleman about him now. He had risen to the height of his office and was the inquisitor who probed, the priest who condemned, not the admiring friend who now flattered and now consoled, now gently directed and now fervently rewarded. Never in her life had she been spoken to as now. She, the petted plaything of her father, the tenderly adored of her husband – if once passionately and now gravely, yet always tenderly! – she to be held as it were by a torturer, a master, an executioner! Appalled, terrified, she shrank within herself at the stern voice, the attitude full of spiritual menace, the words that passed such a terrible sentence on her. ...

'Have I no authority as your priest, your spiritual director? You know that I have! You dare not look up and defy me. And here in this holy place, I command you in the name of God to obey me. ... What is mine [duty] is to enforce your obedience; what yours, to give it!'

⁷⁶ Wolff, p. 194.

⁷⁷ Walter Scott, "Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad" in Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (1802) cited by Emma McEvoy, introduction to Matthew Lewis, The Monk (1796) Howard Anderson (ed) Oxford World Classics, Oxford University Press. Oxford. 1995. p. xxx. (This edition mistakenly postdates Scott's essay to 1902).

Hermione sat there paralysed, overcome with terror and dismay. It was like some terrible dream – some awful vision. She did not recognize the man whose grace and subtle flattery had touched her imagination and stirred the long stagnant waters of romance. He was a new impersonation; but something more compelling, still less to be resisted than the former. ... The vestry seemed to grow dark as night; the radiant earth and help of man to be shut out from her for ever; ... The vicar's form seemed to dilate to more than human stature, his eyes to burn into her soul as if they had been flames of fire. ...

'Have mercy!' she sobbed, shrinking together in her fear.

Did she pray to him or to God? She could not have said which; for at that moment the two were one, and the vicar was God impersonate.

'Kneel!' said Mr Lascelles in a deep voice, lifting her from the chair as he had lifted Theresa from the ground, but instead of taking her to his arms forcing her to her knees. And scarcely knowing what she did or where she was [she]...knelt at the vicar's feet, and led by him made her first broken pitiful confession.

UWL I. pp. 262-4

She has yielded to the priest both in body and in spirit; whether she realizes it or not we recognize that Hermione has been seduced, physically and psychologically manipulated into a situation that we, if we are reading the text as Linton surely intends, must acknowledge she should have resisted and for which we must censure her. To add to the clandestine atmosphere of the episode Lascelles insists that "the matter was to be kept as yet a profound secret from everyone".⁷⁸ While in Hermione's mind there is no suggestion of sexual impropriety in her relationship with the priest, the incident above is only one of a number of occasions that hint at an unseemliness to which she remains oblivious, if Lascelles does not. Indeed, when it finally becomes clear to Hermione that Lascelles has been manipulating her "womanly emotions" she is revolted by what that connotes in the breakdown of her marital relationship, that she is, both figuratively and literally, an unfaithful wife, the destroyer of all that society holds dear.

When Lascelles reveals his decision to marry Edith Everett, the woman he has placed in the Fullerton household in order to ensure there should be no connubial reconciliation, Hermione is overwhelmed by a sense of betrayal and confusion; particularly in the light of Lascelles' previous advocacy of celibacy. She feels "insulted, jilted and aggrieved", yet even so attempts to rationalize her own emotions, "it was because he was false to his own teaching, not because he was false to her. Of course that was impossible!"⁷⁹

⁷⁸ *Under Which Lord?* I. p. 265.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* III. p. 287.

Nevertheless, Hermione's analysis brings her to the realisation that she was infected with a little of the fervour that destroyed Theresa Molyneux and she resolves to seek out her estranged husband and "bring him back in triumph" to reclaim his rightful place in their home and in society. However, everything that we have come to learn of the character of Richard Fullerton indicates that we as readers possess a greater understanding of his disposition than does his wife. The suggestion embedded in the statement that she intends to "bring him back" intimates that she continues to place herself in a position of superiority over her husband - evidence that she has yet to recognize the proper obligations of a dutiful wife.

Serving as a complete contrast to Theresa Molyneux, and as her name suggests, with no suggestion of sexuality, Virginia Fullerton is an asexual figure, a "natural nun", and the concept of marriage, when associated with her, "seemed sacrilege rather than the fulfilment of a natural destiny". At nineteen Virginia is "beginning to ask herself restlessly the meaning of life – beginning to realise that it ought to contain more than the mere routine duties of a pleasant, peaceful, objectless home".⁸⁰ Central to Under Which Lord? is the principle of duty: to family and home, parents and children, church and society, God and man, and the text recognizes that where one's duty lies is not always clear, nor its commission without hardship and distress. Nowhere is this made more manifest than in the character of Virginia Fullerton who in her most formative years lacks the guidance and support without which her life seems set to drift without purpose. Her altruistic impulse and desire to serve humanity remain unformed; they come to nothing because the failure of her parents to offer her appropriate direction or supervision exposes her to the corrupting influence of the representatives of the church.

If she had only known how and where, she would have gladly given herself to the service of humanity, or have dedicated her life to the perpetual worship of God in truth. But, rudderless as her mother was, with no insight for her own part and no message for others – mentally isolated and content with the denial of dogma and the assertion of material fact as was her father, finding in intellect all that she sought in spirituality, in science what she yearned for from God – to whom could she turn for help? what could she believe? how learn what was true

⁸⁰ Ibid. I. pp. 18-19.

and divine in this world of ours, and what false and human only? And, above all, what could she do to utilize her powers for the good of others?

UWLI. p. 21

Lascelles introduces into the community his sister, a woman who shares his religious proclivities and who “had taken Saint Agnes as her patron saint, and had adopted her name in token of her special dedication”.⁸¹ Sister Agnes, a member of an Anglican Sisterhood, recognizing Virginia’s susceptibility, offers her the guidance and instruction that her parents fail to provide. When the girl tells her, “all is so confused at home! Papa is so good, so good, but he believes in nothing at all...and mamma seems not to know what is true and what is not”, Sister Agnes offers herself in place of Virginia’s parents, or rather she offers herself as mother, a position she intimates created for her by divine intervention.⁸² Inviting Virginia to “come to me whenever you feel the need of comfort or advice. Remember, I am your spiritual mother, and you are my child whom God has given me”, as the girl becomes her possession Sister Agnes subverts the notion of motherhood as nurturing and protective, translating it into something predatory and avaricious.⁸³

Linton stresses the exclusion of men from the world that Sister Agnes represents, thus emphasising the feminising influence of Catholicism. Sister Agnes, the title itself emphasising a female community, makes herself a “spiritual mother” to Virginia; the focus of her religious enthusiasm is the “Holy Mother Church”, which she personifies as fulfilling the role of maternal guardian, the church “leads your first steps”, pious women are the church’s “devoted daughters”, while priests are “dutiful sons”. Sister Agnes urges Virginia to reject her father’s influence, insisting that she must “make this stipulation...do not bring your father’s authority between us” demonstrating that her doctrine is one that withdraws from a male presence and rejects masculine authority.⁸⁴ In guiding Virginia to salvation she most often invokes, not God, nor Christ, but the

⁸¹ Ibid. I. p. 70. St. Agnes of Rome is the patron of (amongst others) affianced, betrothed and engaged couples, bodily purity, chastity, virgins, girls and the Children of Mary Immaculate, an association formed in 1830 and which had 100,000 members by the end of the century. The pledge of the Children of Mary includes the promise to “be a good and obedient child, to keep myself pure and innocent, and avoid the occasions of sin”. Ironically, in the light of the events of the novel, the pledge also includes the reminder that the family that prays together, stays together.

⁸² Ibid. I. p. 92.

⁸³ Ibid. I. p. 98.

⁸⁴ Ibid. I. p. 94.

“Blessed Mother” and her prayers are invariably addressed to the “Blessed Virgin Mary”. Seen in the overall tone of the novel the implication is clear, together the person and the beliefs of Sister Agnes are both corrupt and corrupting. In enticing Virginia away from the protection of the family she is challenging the institution upon which the stability of the nation is founded, encouraging Virginia to reject what is wholesome and natural and embrace the deviant and destructive.

The second chapter of the last volume of Under Which Lord? is called “To Its Logical Conclusion”, the logical conclusion being that Agnes and Virginia, together with Cuthbert Molyneux, convert fully to Roman Catholicism and withdraw from open society into monastic and convent life. In this Linton was drawing on popular anxiety that Ritualism, being “only one step removed from Rome”, enticed young people away from home, family and wholesome society into a culture where they are unable to fulfil their natural function, which in the case of young women is marriage and maternity.⁸⁵ Under Sister Agnes’s control the already ingenuous Virginia is drawn further away from reality and into a cloistered atmosphere of religious piety that increasingly isolates her from the outside world of conventional existence. As has already been noted, the implication that she will never fulfil the role of wife and mother considered natural to her sex is persuasive. We are told that Sister Agnes, despite being “well-favoured” has rejected marriage and maternity for what she considers a higher vocation; under her influence Virginia is encouraged to do the same.

Under the pretence of embarking on a short period of retreat, to which her mother acquiesces and concealing her plans wholly from her father, Virginia and Sister Agnes abandon England and run away to Rome where they take holy orders and enter a convent. The girl has been stolen from her parents and her community and the impression of elopement is compelling; the guilty couple flee in secret, aided by equally misguided friends, pursued unsuccessfully by an enraged father who, belatedly learning the truth, vainly enlists the help of the authorities to locate the fugitives before it is too late. The errant couple make good their escape, entering into, not the institution of

⁸⁵ Ibid. III. p. 52. The focus of Linton’s anxiety in all her work, both fiction and non fiction, was the younger generation of women (and to a much lesser extent young men) still in those formative years which made them, as Linton saw it, susceptible to unwholesome influence.

marriage as in a conventional elopement, but something that is clearly defined as an altogether less wholesome state. To her family and friends Virginia's is quite literally, a fate worse than death. Richard Fullerton declares that "the child is dead to us now for all time", the local community "felt the news as the shock of a crime", while Hardisty, who had harboured hopes of a future with Virginia, felt as if she had "committed self-murder".

He would rather that the girl whom he loved had died than she had done this thing: and he mourned her as one dead, but dead with a strange, obscure stain of sin on her former purity.

UWL III. pp. 54-57

We are told that on embracing Catholicism, Sister Agnes, "thanked God that she had now reached the haven of absolute purity where men did not enter".⁸⁶ However, this sentiment would almost certainly have invited contradiction from many of its Victorian readers, who, as I have argued, were more familiar with the association of monasticism with corruption and impurity. The seclusion of the monastic cell and the celibacy of the clergy had long been the subject of grave suspicion and imagined corruption, convents even more so. Many people believed that religious institutions, both Anglican and Catholic, were enticing wealthy young women into the cloister for pecuniary reasons-or worse. Letters and articles in the popular press fuelled this mistrust; books appeared, written by former members of religious communities, which described disciplinary practices and physical privation that appalled public opinion, and legal and parliamentary campaigns called for the regulation and inspection of religious orders.⁸⁷ Even the ultra-respectable The Queen reported in disturbing detail the forced "rescue" of a young woman from a Suffolk convent. The article records, in terms more reminiscent of Wilkie Collins than a reputable society newspaper, the circumstances

⁸⁶ Ibid. III. p. 52.

⁸⁷ In 1871 C. N. Newdegate, M. P. and leading anti-Catholic campaigner, successfully called for an inquiry into Roman Catholic "Conventual and Monastic Institutions". This prompted much debate in the popular press, including an archly expressed discussion on whether the gratings on a convent window were for preventing people breaking in or breaking out. 1875-77 also saw the publication of a new edition of Foxe's Book of Martyrs (1563) probably the best known of English anti-Catholic literature and an immediate best seller. This edition contained an essay by a Protestant clergyman, the Reverend Ingram Cobbin, in which he reminds the reader that in times past monasteries were scenes of lasciviousness and vice, and convents "no better than brothels of the worst description". Cobbin's imputation is that such institutions remain the site of moral corruption.

surrounding the seizure of a Miss Rolfe, “a young lady of very prepossessing appearance” who had entered a religious order of her own free will and with her father’s consent, which he later revoked. The girl was twice removed from the establishment, the second time, with the assistance of “several strong men, some of whom had offensive weapons”. The “besieging party” broke down the doors of the convent with hammers and crowbars, assaulted a priest who attempted to bar their way, and forcibly removed the woman, who all the while resisted and protested her desire to remain. She was bundled into a waiting cab and taken to the railway station, where, “still dressed in the habit of the order” and causing “much interest”, she was bodily carried across the platform by several persons and deposited into a carriage and her waiting father’s custody. No further report is made, although the article does reveal that Miss Rolfe had earlier voiced her fears that “an attempt was being made to make her out a lunatic, with a view to getting her into an asylum”.⁸⁸

Linton’s readers, even if they did not subscribe to them, would have been aware of the suspicions surrounding similar religious establishments as they read about Sister Agnes and Hermione. Indeed, Ringrove Hardisty obliquely refers to the belief that religious orders were sites of moral corruption as he sadly considers Virginia to be “stained by sin”. Linton is unequivocal in her insistence that religion appropriates natural sexuality and corrupts it, for a woman to dedicate herself to God and a lifetime of religious devotion is not a higher calling, but one that arrogates women’s natural and pre-eminent destiny; for a man it also overturns what is innate, abdicating individual moral conscience to an arcane authority that sets worship above the world. The Catholic adoption of celibacy, a nun’s vows of dedication and the wearing of a wedding ring symbolic of marriage to Christ, subvert biological and cultural imperatives, destabilise society and challenge natural harmony.

While also an opponent of Evangelism Linton did not see it as so great a threat to national well being, as it was “by no means as dangerous” as Catholicism. “Men”, she

⁸⁸ “Abduction of a Young Lady from Claydon ‘Nunnery’ ” *The Queen*, February 16 1867. p. 133. The implication being that, either having a lunatic in the family, forcibly incarcerated in an asylum, was socially more acceptable than having them voluntarily joining a religious order, or that the desire to join a convent was automatically evidence of mental derangement.

wrote, “suffer individually from the moral grip of the Low Church” but its grip is “more congregational than organic” and so can be “shaken off when desired”.⁸⁹ From this we can see that for Linton Evangelism was not as insidious as Ritualism; however, as the following extract indicates, she believed it to be just as emasculating. Setting aside Linton’s antipathy toward the Roman Catholic Church for the part it played in her estrangement from Edward MacDermot, her opposition to Catholicism was, she said, principally an intellectual response, whereas her hostility toward Evangelism, “it was profoundly abhorrent to me”, was largely emotional. It was, however, similarly rooted in her early experiences as an adolescent and young woman.

The constricted human sympathies of these people - [the ‘Evangelical section’] their hostility to science - their superstitious adhesion to every word of the Bible, whatever geology or philology may say – their arrogant assumption of absolute rightness – their greater reverence for certain mystical and unprovable doctrines than for active and practical virtues – their unnatural asceticism, which has none of the manliness of stoicism in it, but is founded on the crushing idea of Sin, that pallid spectre everywhere, even in our affections – in a word, their sanctimoniousness, gave me in my youth a repulsion for the whole school, which I retain to my cooler and soberer old age. I have had a wide personal experience of this section, and when I speak of them it is according to knowledge; - which is the only excuse I can offer for a prejudice I confess to be illiberal and unphilosophical.

CK II. pp. 77-78

Despite Linton’s claims that her response to Evangelism was emotional and “unphilosophical”, the aspects that she identified as most abhorrent to her, hostility to science and the denial of that which is provable over that which cannot be proved, were (as will be discussed further) issues with which she engaged as fully as she did with its doctrine.

Linton’s aversion to the excesses of Evangelism, and the wide personal experience that she claimed, stemmed in part from a “period of spiritual endeavour and frustration” in her own youth.⁹⁰ In Kirkland she describes a period of youthful, fervent, ecstatic devotion and subservient fortitude, during which she deprives herself of luxuries and deliberately makes herself uncomfortable in order to demonstrate stoical endurance.

⁸⁹ Kirkland II. p. 76. A.W. Benn recalls that “more than once in conversation [Linton] has been heard to say that the Roman Catholic Church ought, if possible, to be put down with main force”. Layard, p. 200.

⁹⁰ Ibid. I. p. 90.

Forgoing all material comforts it was the young Eliza Lynn's intention that she should achieve "superior piety" through physical deprivation.

For my own part, full of youthful zeal and the logic of consistency, I determined to live the Christian life as far as it was possible: helped thereto by the influence and example of the strong old heathen times. I, at least, in my own person would be faithful to the Lord and a man among men.

I began by renouncing all the pleasant softnesses and flattering vanities of my youth, and made myself a moral hybrid, half ascetic, half stoic. I accustomed myself to privations and held luxuries as deadly sins.for a whole year I [slept] on the floor and despised bed as an unrighteous effeminacy...I taught myself to bear mild torture without wincing...I gave away all the 'treasures' I had accumulated since my childhood, in imitation of the Apostles and according to Christ's injunctions to the rich young man...I set myself secret penance for secret sins.⁹¹

CK I. pp. 84-86

However, the reader is invited to perceive the Evangelical excesses of Linton's pursuit of "superior piety" as "youthful zeal" rather than the consequence of reasoned analysis. Linton is suggesting that with maturity comes a greater wisdom, derived from the superior judgement and rationality of more mature understanding. Her ironic application of "the logic of consistency" serving to highlight the naivety of youth over the pragmatism of experience.⁹²

Less esoteric was her acquaintance with a Low Church minister, sardonically referred to in Kirkland as the "Honourable and Reverend Mr. Caird", for whom Linton felt an instant revulsion; his "very personality sends one's blood the wrong way" and whose "manner, look, voice, enunciation [and] gestures" were all "studied and artificial". However, despite her "confession" otherwise, her antipathy was not only visceral, it was also intellectual and she held doctrinal as well as emotional objections to Evangelism. Large amongst the criticism she directed at Caird and "all his school" was that they would "admit no refining away of words nor enlargement of sense by the doctrine of development".⁹³ Linton believed that by lacking both the capacity and the willingness to

⁹¹ Again this recalls Maggie Tulliver's response in Mill on the Floss, to her Thomas à Kempis inspired moment of revelation, although Linton's period of stoical endurance precedes her epiphany. See "Religion" n. 20.

⁹² Kirkland's resolution to be a "man among men" echoes the masculine qualities of "Our Vicar" who has lived as a "man among men", as does Joshua Davidson.

⁹³ Kirkland II. p. 79, 84.

adapt to changing circumstances Evangelism inevitably stifled the intellect, thereby acting as an impediment to collective and individual social and intellectual advance. It was in part this rigidity that Linton identified as fundamental to Evangelism that made it so distasteful to her.

We have seen how Linton interrogated the social divisiveness of Catholicism through her representations of the challenges she believed it offered to “natural” authority and to conventional models of collective and individual relationships. However, it was not only in Catholicism that Linton identified a desire to appropriate and redefine the natural, and in Kirkland we are reminded that in some ways Linton can be seen as much as a product of a rural, and less inhibited and artless eighteenth century as a more tightly controlled urban nineteenth, as she describes what she perceived as Evangelism’s hypocritical and repressed attitude toward unaffected emotion and its denunciation of natural (unaffected and spontaneous) pleasure as sinful.⁹⁴ Evangelists keep:

thin lips, tightly closed...unable or unwilling to take a deep draught of vitalising air. Who knows what sobbing breaths of sinful passion may not have profaned it? – what rude impulses of vigorous life may not have stirred it? – unlawful to those whose castigated pulses may never throb beyond the chill regulation beat...no generous flash of quick emotion brightens the cheek nor softens the eye, dilates the pinched nostril nor dimples the sterile mouth. ...[Eyelids lowered over eyes] which may not see too much of Nature, that robust child of goat-footed Pan, with its bold glances roving free and wild over all the mysteries of life, and its ruddy mouth, red with the juice of fruits, laughing up to the sun...
CK II. pp. 79-80

Linton’s description, recalling “The Great God Pan” of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “A Musical Instrument” (1862) and the oozing fruitfulness of Keats’ earlier “To Autumn” (1819) offer a vivid image of the sensual, honest pleasures of nature from which the Evangelist baulks, clearly signalling Evangelism as arid and barren.⁹⁵ Her mischievous evocation of the Pagan is unmistakably designed to contrast an unaffected

⁹⁴ Despite Linton being born well into the nineteenth-century, the family can be seen as much from the old century as from the new (her eldest sister was born in 1805). In addition, their rural isolation held back the advances of “civilization” to some degree. In Kirkland (Vol. I. pp. 1-33) Linton discusses the greater tolerance and the greater pleasures, “things were merrier for us,” of a less sophisticated, more unaffected, age.

⁹⁵ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “A Musical Instrument” (1862) “What was he doing the great god pan, / Down in the reeds by the river?” lines 1-2. John Keats, “To Autumn” (1819).

spontaneous celebration of life with Evangelism's suppression of the natural, a word which the prospective mother-in-law of Linton's sister rebukes her (almost) daughter-in-law for even using, "Natural, Ellen! How can you, a Christian young woman, use a word at once so indelicate and profane?"⁹⁶

In Kirkland Linton offers the description of her sister's relationship with her prospective parents-in-law as a personal example of the dogmatism of Evangelism. Ellen's fiancée's father, a Low Church minister, forbids the forthcoming marriage unless Ellen, "as the plain and manifest duty of a Christian woman" agreed to "give Kirkland up as completely as if he were dead". Ellen refuses to renounce her brother, not because she shares his agnostic convictions (she was in fact bitterly opposed to Linton's stance) but because of family loyalty, and, " 'if Morley' – her lover – 'has not the courage to stand by me, he need not.' " He did not, but Ellen "did better afterwards" so that at least ended happily.⁹⁷

Kirkland's repugnance for Evangelism (and even greater aversion to Catholicism) can also be found in narrator John's description of Joshua Davidson's distaste for the inconsistency of Evangelistic theory.

I do not think that what is called the Evangelical school ever warned Joshua as the Ritualists had done. If the assumptions of the church, clad in her venerable authority, seemed to him excessive, the assumptions of sectarianism, where each man is an independent pope and quite as bigoted as the real one, were more so. ... It seemed to him a theory entangled in contradictions. Faith is the gift of God; no one can believe at will, but only as God gives him grace to do so; but if you do not believe you are damned, and God punishes you for not having what He will not bestow. Again you have to distinguish between your various kinds of faith, and you must discern accurately which kind is sent by God and which by the Devil. No outward test can tell you: the Calvinist holds the Romanist in deadly error; the Romanist damns the heretic with no hope of mercy; the Anglican talks about the deadly sin of dissent; and not one of them regards the Unitarian, the Jew, or the Pagan, as in any sort of possibility a child of God, or as aught but a confirmed, if unconscious son of the Devil. What known test then can be applied to all these conflicting schools? To Joshua's mind, none;

JD pp. 46-47

⁹⁶ Kirkland II. p. 81. Anderson, Woman against Women, suggests that Ellen is Linton's sister Rose. p. 39.

⁹⁷ Ibid. II. pp. 87-88. The incident is reminiscent of Linton's relationship with MacDermot, though Linton, unlike her sister, did not "do better after".

Whether it was by means of inhibiting natural feeling, as in Evangelism's case, or subverting it in the case of Catholicism, Linton perceived both doctrines as profoundly detrimental to the future of mankind. Illiberal or not, her condemnation of them both on the grounds of their hostility toward science, their denial of provable truth in favour of un-provable myth, and their failure to stand up to logical investigation is entirely characteristic. Joshua rejects "all these conflicting schools" on the grounds that none fulfilled his own personal test; none offered, "the unerring truth – truth centralised, unified, focussed" that he, like Linton, continually sought and which Fullerton in Under Which Lord? believes that he has found.⁹⁸

IV. Broad Church Anglicanism and Essential Englishness.

Notwithstanding her own position as a free-thinker, her atheist heroes with their scientific inclinations and her condemnation of the Catholic Church for its autocratic influence, Linton was, like the majority of her contemporaries, a firm advocate of the social control that the custom of religious practice exerted. It is tempting to level the accusation of duplicity at Linton for conforming to the practice of conventional religious custom and ceremony whilst rejecting the faith itself. One of the many epithets commonly applied to the Victorian age is, of course, that it was an era of hypocrisy, in which society routinely condemned that which it clandestinely condoned and publicly supported that which it privately rejected. However, Linton's position should be considered in the light of her confidence in her notion of intellectual progress and social duty. Despite her professed socialism, her early republicanism and the vehemence of her social criticism, for Linton, as for most of her generation, the English way of life provided a model for the whole world to emulate and it was on the perceived threat to English superiority that she focussed the opening statement of her most notorious work, "The Girl of the Period".

Time was when the phrase, 'a fair young English girl,' meant the ideal of womanhood; to us at least of home birth and breeding. It meant a creature generous, capable, modest; something franker than a Frenchwoman, more to be

⁹⁸ Davidson p. 47.

trusted than an Italian, as brave as an American but more refined, as domestic as a German and more graceful.⁹⁹

Her argument held that, “when we had the pick of creation...our allegiance never wandered”, but that in rejecting the “Old English ideal” the girl of the period was not only compromising her own integrity but also that of the nation.

It was accepted that society was by no means perfect, public debate undertaken in Parliament and in the press, and the numerous movements calling for social, political and economic reform were testimony to the fact that many sections of society felt that the realities of English life were far from perfect. Nevertheless, in spite of its many imperfections, it was axiomatic that to be English, with all that Englishness entailed, was to be a part of the most civilised, and civilising, nation on earth. At the heart of that continuing process of civilisation was intellectual liberty and freedom of conscience, both of which were, to Linton’s mind, challenged by the authoritarianism of Catholicism.

It was easy to foresee the tyranny of the High Church, should it ever have supreme power. For though Tractarianism was only in the protesting and struggling stage, a condition of things for which Liberals have a constitutional sympathy, yet we knew then, as we know now, that it was the effort of tyranny, happily restrained, to place its yoke on the necks of men. It was like Sinbad’s Old Man of the Sea, apparently helpless and ill-used and asking leave only to live like the rest. Once seat him on your shoulders and you will never know intellectual freedom again.

CK II. pp. 75-76

In Under Which Lord? Linton repeatedly reminds her readers of Lascelles’ Catholic proclivities. His predecessor is a vicar where he is a priest who keeps his eyes lowered, “with the taught and artificial humility of the Romish priest”.¹⁰⁰ The parish church is refurbished with lush hangings, censers and statuary and all the trappings of High Church luxury, transforming the traditional English place of worship into a site of sensual experience, where colour, scent and sound combine to please the senses, which the “sturdy old Protestants” recognise as the accessories of “patent Popery”.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Linton, “The Girl of the Period,” Saturday Review, March 14 1868. p. 339.

¹⁰⁰ Under Which Lord? I. p. 41.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* I. pp. 221-222.

Lascelles' female congregation is overawed by his exoticism and glamour, and, to the horror of the right thinking - those who resist his manipulations - he begins to hear the women's regular confession and offer weekly, even daily, communion. The Nesbitt family, serving as a contrast to the divided Fullertons, embody the model English family and in Beatrice Nesbitt we are offered the epitome of English girlhood, a personification of the "young English girl of the past...content to be what God and nature made her", an ideal whom Linton characterised as the antithesis of her Girl of the Period.¹⁰²

Lascelles' unmistakably predatory attempts to entice Beatrice Nesbitt into his practice of worship fail because she remains supremely confident in her own position. When the priest archly likens her to:

'Rebecca in Ivanhoe...or a splendid young Heathen whose conversion will one day be the glory of her confessor: - of me?' he added smiling with paternal benignity on the pretty dark-haired creature.

UWL I. p. 309

Beatrice points out, "with mild surprise and gentle indignation", that she is neither a "Jewess or a Heathen" but a Christian and therefore in no need of conversion. His accusation that her self-assurance is the result of conceit generates the reply that Linton clearly considers every decent and respectable girl should give.

'I do not think it is being conceited not to feel a Jewess or a Heathen when I am English and a Christian,' said Beatrice simply. 'And as for the confession you spoke of, I certainly should never do that. Fancy confessing – just like a Roman Catholic! How dreadful! Besides, I have nothing to confess; and it is not English, nor proper.'

UWL I. p. 310

To which Ringrove Hardisty, the model of English manhood, adds "The best confessor for a girl is her mother – for a woman, her husband...Any one else is worse than a mistake". Thus Linton re-emphasises the connection between English patriotism, Anglican, that is Church of England, worship, and the hegemonic model of English domesticity, with an underlying suggestion that Roman Catholicism is not a "proper" i.e. acceptable, model of Christianity. To convert to Catholicism was not only to

¹⁰² "The Girl of the Period," p. 339-340.

distance oneself from English life, it was also to encroach into the microcosm of national harmony, the family unit, leading to dissolution, estrangement and isolation.

Linton's view of the "foreignness" of Roman Catholicism is also emphasised in Kirkland when she describes, always stressing that her knowledge is the product of personal experience, the intellectual and physical inferiority of young Frenchmen brought up in the Catholic faith, comparing them unfavourably with their more vigorous and wholesome English counterparts. Recalling her residence in Paris, she describes her host's son and his fellow countrymen (her description of M Wilfred recalls that of Alick Corfield in Dundas) in less than flattering terms.¹⁰³

M. Wilfred, the youngest son, did not often join us. He was still under tuition, and in the care of M. l'Abbé, who literally never let him out of his sight, never allowed him to be away from him one moment, day nor night, except when he was with his mother. The boy was then seventeen; and I think our average schoolboys would have set him down laconically as an 'awful duffer'. I used to pity him for what was substantially a life of slavery, for a strictness of surveillance beyond that which we think necessary for our girls. It seemed to me an enervating, emasculating thing all through and ill calculated to make a man of the best type.

Indeed, I did not think much of the essential manliness of any of the young men. They were all 'petit maîtres', dissipated rather than energetic, and with the strangest mixture possible of indifference, unbelief and superstition in religious matters.

CK II. pp. 170-171

In her 1880 novel The Rebel of the Family Linton's disdain for foppish Frenchmen extends beyond their religious beliefs or a questioning their essential manliness, their morals are equally dubious, all of which stand in contrast, and are hazardous to, English domestic harmony.

Bois-Duval was a man of nerve, and held to the doctrine that it is no part of a man's duty to take care of a woman's character. That belongs to herself if married, to her mother if she be a maiden.

Rebel. p. 196

¹⁰³ Linton had lived in Paris for most of 1853. Her sojourn in that city was an especially happy time even though she was barely able to support herself, earning what living she could by writing miscellaneous articles for various English publications including Dickens' Household Words. She wrote to Dickens' sub editor William Wills that she would rather live in Paris on "£100 a year than live in London on £500". E Lynn to Mr. W H Wills, 16 June 1853, Layard, p. 81.

M. le Vicomte de Bois-Duval is as predatory as Launcelot Lascelles, whose own un-English name, like that of Bois-Duval, sets him apart as an exotic (and serves as a warning of his potential as an adulterer). Leaving his customary haunts, Bois-Duval casually “saunters along” through the London streets, the heart of the nation’s capital, “taking stock of local possibilities”.¹⁰⁴ Thwarted in his attempt to abscond with the foolish Eva, and having previously destroyed the marriage of the novel’s hero (driving the erring wife insane in the process) Bois-Duval represents an intrusive alien presence, a harbinger of disease and corruption at the centre of national life, his presence a reminder to every proper Englishman of his duty of protection toward the nation’s vulnerable female population. This duty, as Under Which Lord? makes clear, is not without its own dangers, drawing a fine line between the need to make women aware of the moral hazards they may encounter whilst simultaneously preserving the purity that was a fundamental part of their essential Englishness.

French literature is as potentially a corrupting influence as Frenchmen themselves. In a short but highly melodramatic novel, Stabbed in the Dark (1885) set in Naples, Linton has a naïve Italian princess, seduced by a guest of her husband, who introduces her to dangerous French literature, “not the good little books which ...receive the sanction of the church”, but books which kept her “excited and absorbed”, that awakened her both at the moment of reading and “kept her awake long – long after”, volumes whose authors, George Sand, Victor Hugo and Balzac became her “new friends”. The villain of Stabbed in the Dark, Raimondo Di Ticino, is also an outsider, an interloper in Neapolitan society, and significantly he is half French. The conclusion of the story has Di Ticino murdering the cuckolded husband and allowing his victim’s wife to take the blame for her lover’s crime, when “neither fit to live, nor yet to die” she is confined to the convent of Sepolte Vive, the “Buried Alive”, while he goes on to pursue his ambitions by contracting a marriage to the daughter of a politician.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Rebel p. 287.

¹⁰⁵ Stabbed in the Dark (1885) Geo. Munroe & Son, New York. 1886. pp. 45-46, 140. Linton considered French literature in general unwholesome, although she made an exception in the case of Balzac whom she considered “the greatest master of analytical fiction”, “Candour in English Fiction – II.” New Review, Jan. 1890, p. 13. On the other hand, Émile Zola was “a shameless purveyor of hideous garbage”, “M. Zola’s Idée Mère,” Universal Review, May 1888, p. 27. Despite Linton’s antipathy toward dangerous

It was not only the predatory foreign male, with his mysterious Continental fascination, who symbolised a threat to national, domestic stability. The new generation of women, less inclined to remain the “relative creatures” as defined by Mrs Ellis and whom Linton labelled as Girls of the Period, were also envisaged as a hazard to national integrity.¹⁰⁶ No longer standing as superior to the unrefined American or the graceless German girl, the deceitful Frenchwoman or the mendacious Italian, Linton represented her “Girl of the Period” as endangering the well being of the nation. She recognised the charms of young women of other countries “when met with in [their] own domain”, but saw the Girl of the Period as an insidious, internal threat, arising from a self-interest that seemed to Linton to be so far removed from the English ideal as to represent another race entirely, “a race of women as utterly unlike the old insular ideal as if we had created another nation altogether”.¹⁰⁷

Her treatment of Bois-Duval, and French literature notwithstanding, there were other aspects of French life to which Linton had always been attracted, most notably the radical republicanism that was to lead to the establishment of the ill-fated Paris Commune of 1871. Linton’s essential premise in Joshua Davidson is that to take Christianity to its logical conclusions would be to embrace Communism. Davidson is one of the first members of the International Workingmen’s Association and an enthusiastic participant in the establishment of the Commune, only fleeing the city in the last days of the Commune’s destruction by government troops who, “like wolves let loose”, brought to an end “the short hour of a nation’s hope”.¹⁰⁸ Even so, in Davidson the English participants in the episode are represented as distinct and set apart from their European counterparts, remaining, in an epitome of English restraint, level headed, calm and composed, whilst the actions of their continental comrades become frenzied and out of control.

literature, and Zola, she did not advocate censorship and gave her name to a petition (May 1889) protesting against the conviction of publisher Ernest Vizetelly for distributing Zola’s work. “Buried Alive”, recalls the chapter of that name in Mary Braddon’s phenomenally successful Lady Audley’s Secret (1862) in which the supposedly insane Lucy Audley is confined to a French lunatic asylum.

¹⁰⁶ Sarah Stickney Ellis (1812-1872) Best known for her popular and widely read books in which she advised women on their conduct. Her Daughters of England (1842) stated that women’s “whole life from the cradle to the grave is one of feeling rather than of action; whose highest duty is so often to suffer and be still; whose deepest enjoyments are all relative; who has nothing, and is nothing of herself; whose experience, if unparticipated, is a total blank”.

¹⁰⁷ “The Girl of the Period,” p. 340.

¹⁰⁸ Davidson p. 147.

Paris was mad – mad with despair, with famine, with shame, disease, excitement...No one looked sane, save the leaders, and perhaps a few of us more cool-headed Anglo-Saxons. The Poles, who had flocked in to take part in a cause they identified with their own broken nationality, added the fever of political despair... the Italians poured in their bitter hatred to the priests as oil on flames – emblems to them of tyranny, treachery, ignorance and persecution...

JD pp. 136-7

Joshua Davidson passionately believes in republicanism and in the message of communism, he is prepared to die for his beliefs, like his hero Delescluze on the barricades of Paris, or as Christ on the cross, not inflamed and raving but with calm resolve.¹⁰⁹ To feel or to believe with passion is legitimate - to give way to passion and by doing so lose control is not.

In The Atonement of Leam Dundas (1876) we are shown the consequences of introducing a feverish alien presence, displaying “unenglish” passion, into English society; death, division and destruction, Linton suggests, must inevitably follow. Sebastian Dundas, a tall fair handsome Englishman, “brings home for his wife a superbly beautiful Spanish woman with the face of a sibyl, the temper of a fiend, the habits of a savage, and ignorance to correspond”, a woman who represents a “misfitting fragment” in the “well-ordered social mosaic” of an English country village.¹¹⁰ The reader is repeatedly reminded of Pepita Dundas’ Catholic background; she is pictured “fingering her rosary”, “telling her beads”, calling on the Madonna and entreating the saints to hear her protestations. In an inversion of English custom and attitude, which clearly invites an ironic contradiction, this uncultivated interloper accuses the inhabitants of North Aston of being “wretched heathens” because they have “no festas,

¹⁰⁹ Louis Charles Delescluze (1809-1871) French journalist and radical republican leader. When the Commune’s defeat became inevitable he deliberately placed himself in the line of fire and was shot and killed by government troops.

¹¹⁰ Dundas I. p. 25. Even before the marriage takes place Dundas is aware that it can never be successful, but he lacks the moral strength to end the relationship. Spanish women had attracted Linton’s attention before; in a Feb. 1862 article, “Domestic Life” for Temple Bar she evaluated the marital relationships of various European nations, including those of the Spanish, whose representative wife was, “Delores in rags, unkempt, unwashed, - a really ugly specimen of beautiful womanhood defaced by carelessness and dirt”. p. 405-406.

no bull-fights...no colour, no priests and no saints”.¹¹¹ As dreadful as her Catholicism and inextricably bound up with it, Pepita Dundas serves as an example of one of Linton’s greatest abominations, a bad wife and a worse mother.

Passionate and ignorant, she had been but an undesirable kind of mother for Leam; teaching the child to hate her father – teaching her, indeed, the doctrine of hate all through; setting her in opposition to her surroundings; filling her young head with false pride, ignorant prejudices, foolish fancies; stifling religion under superstition, and keeping her as untaught as useless.

Dundas I. pp.163-164

She instructs her daughter that she should have no respect or love for anything English, including English religion. The insistence of Pepita Dundas that Leam reject utterly her father’s authority presages Sister Agnes’ urges in Under Which Lord? that Virginia Fullerton should “not let her father’s authority come between them”. As a consequence of Pepita’s unnatural mothering Leam grows up despising everything and everybody around her. Her mother displays no self-restraint or moral discipline and encourages her daughter in the same dissipated behaviour, reminding her that in doing so she is fulfilling her duty to her Spanish heritage, a heritage that is represented quite explicitly as bloodthirsty and uncouth, profoundly alien to the more civilized and orderly English society. She tells Leam:

‘Ah! Little one, when you are old enough to have money of your own, we will go to my beloved Andalusia, and live there together under the grapes and the olives with the saints and good Christians! We will leave this accursed place, and that brigand, your father, and we will go to where men know how to live and love. ... The dances to the snapping castanets – and the bull-fights! Holy Virgin! It is fine to see the men and bulls! Good bulls, brave bulls, with their man a-piece killed, and the horses made into mincemeat! You must like that, little Leama, else you are no true daughter of Andalusia, no child of Spain. ... It is better than the first communion, and something like it. ... Would that we were there, away from this English hole of mud, and that traitor your father! Tell me, Leama, that you love me, little one, and hate him as much as I do.’

Dundas I. p. 95-96

¹¹¹ Ibid. I. p. 30. The similarity of the forenames of Pepita Dundas in Atonement and Perdita Winstanley in Rebel is notable. From the Latin for lost, they recall Shakespeare’s Perdita in A Winter’s Tale, lost and abandoned both women are set apart from the society in which they find themselves; Pepita in both culture and country, Perdita in family, ideals and principles. Their names also suggest their proximity to the state of perdition, the final and irrevocable spiritual ruin that threatens them both. Deborah Meem in “Eliza Lynn Linton and the Rise of Lesbian Consciousness” (p. 548) suggests that Winstanley may derive from Gerrard Winstanley, a leading spokesman for the Diggers, a seventeenth century radical egalitarian movement.

The repeated allusions to the rituals and tenets of Roman Catholicism jumbled with the references to an obviously unruly alien culture emphasise the outlandish and uncivilised nature of both. In addition, stress is laid on Pepita's materialism as she explicitly states that she means to appropriate Leam's inheritance, intending to steal her future, as Sister Agnes was to steal Virginia's in Under Which Lord?, corrupting both the individual and collective expectations of English womanhood and the moral integrity of the nation.

Following Pepita's death, brought on by a paroxysm of jealous rage after finding her husband flirting with the duplicitous Madame de Montfort, the adolescent Leam is haunted by the imagined presence of her dead mother. When Mr Dundas marries this glamorous usurper Leam poisons her with prussic acid stolen from a neighbour's house.¹¹² Her crime goes undetected and Leam is sent away to school, and whilst there gains a better understanding of morality, returning after four years to a community whose anxiety, "to see if the Ethiopian of North Aston had shed her skin, if the leopardess had changed her spots", reveals that they continue to regard her, like her mother as an alien, an animal elemental presence that cannot be controlled.¹¹³ Leam is tormented by feelings of guilt and when she falls in love with the young Lord of the Manor, Edgar Harrowby, lately returned from a military career, she feels compelled to confess her crime to him. (Harrowby's past is not without its own secrets, including the fact that Madame de Montfort while purporting to be the widow of a French diplomat is actually Violet Cray of St John's Wood, his former mistress and mother of his illegitimate child) Harrowby is appalled by Leam's revelation, in spite of his claims that her honesty will make him love her all the more, when he learns of her crime all plans for their future are instantly shattered. Though he continues to love her, his concern for his own social position, together with the notion that only a woman who conforms to his own and society's ideal of innocence is worthy of becoming his wife, cause him to abandon her.

His wife must be spotless; that he knew; and he would marry none whose past was not as unsullied as new-fallen snow... Absolute purity...he owed it to

¹¹² Prussic acid was soon to become the poison of choice for the *fin de siècle* New Woman.

¹¹³ Dundas I. p. 286

himself and his position that his wife, man of many loves as he was, should be this...He himself might be stained from head to heel with the soil of sin, but his wife must be, as has been said, without flaw or blemish, immaculate and free from fault.

Dundas II. p.198.

Leam Dundas has much in common with Hardy's Tess; both are victims of circumstance, betrayed by those who purport to love them and whose most urgent duty should have been their protection, and though both commit murder, Leam like Tess is deserving of the soubriquet "a pure woman." It may be argued that Leam's stealing of the poison is evidence of premeditation, thus proving her culpability, Linton however makes it clear that Leam was driven by "instinct, vague but powerful" and was acting under the malign influence of her dead mother; so much so that the Reverend Birkett "honestly held her as one possessed, and regretted in his own mind that the Church had no formula for efficient exorcism". Thus simultaneously revealing his own want of Christian sympathy and his primitive adherence to the superstition of demonic possession.¹¹⁴

The Atonement of Leam Dundas concludes with the death of its heroine who, having found proof of Edgar Harrowby's secret past, is so anxious to "keep his secret safe and his name still honoured", that she resolves to go onto the moors to "bury the evidence of his shame and sin out of the sight and ken of all till the Day of Judgment should reveal it", thereby demonstrating that she truly is a pure woman, prepared to sacrifice even her own life for the protection of the one she loves.¹¹⁵ Overcome by grief she staggers and falls, dying by the roadside where she is found by Harrowby, newly married to the "speckless, spotless" Adelaide Birkett, whose disdain Leam had endured all her life. Too late Harrowby realises Leam's essential goodness, and her womanly virtues are contrasted with the frigid callousness of the "ideal" Adelaide, who, as Harrowby weeps over Leam's body, coldly enquires "Is this manly?" irritated that even in death Leam should fail to observe the decencies appropriate to her class.

It was an offence to one like Adelaide that the girl whom she had always hated, but who had been in a sense her equal and companion, should have died with

¹¹⁴ Ibid. I. p. 258, 268.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. II. p. 295.

this tragic unconventionality...[with] neither respectability nor decency. When people of Leam's condition die they should die in their beds, decently as befits the rational and well-conducted.

Dundas II. p. 302.

The moral double standard of social collusion that Linton exposed in Davidson - that it was through the degradation of women such as prostitute Mary Princip that the purity of women such as Adelaide Birkett was assured - is made manifest in Harrowby's clandestine relationship with Madame de Montfort and his rejection of Leam in favour of Adelaide Birkett. In their relationship we see evidence of the hypocrisy of placing appearance before honour and pretension before principle; themes with which, as we have seen, Linton was much concerned, and to which she repeatedly returned.

Serving as a projection of the "new race of women" to which Linton alluded in "The Girl of the Period", Madame de Montfort, who was neither a soiled dove nor a classical model of a fallen woman, symbolises the destructive potential of the transgressive Englishwoman.

A handsome woman without money or social status, fond of luxury and to whom work was abhorrent, with a clear will and distinct knowledge of her own desires, clever and destitute of moral principle,

Dundas I. p.260

Her life had been one of premeditated and elected dissipation and self-indulgent, hedonistic and un-regretted duplicity. And even though she resolves to "do righteously" by her new husband, her honesty does not stretch so far as to confess her past to him.¹¹⁶ Having first chosen a life of deceit and of social and moral transgression Madame seemingly cannot ever be redeemed. (Linton stresses that choice is a central issue; Madame de Montfort, unlike the novel's eponymous heroine or Mary Princip in Davidson, has made a deliberate and premeditated decision to adopt a certain lifestyle) However, given the tragic consequences of Leam's confession to Edgar Harrowby, it rather seems as if Linton's message is that once having violated moral or civil law, whether voluntarily or unwilling, there can be no real hope of a satisfactory deliverance.

¹¹⁶ Dundas I. p. 260.

Madame de Montfort was not Linton's only female delinquent who purports to be French. In a story originally published in London Society in February 1873 and reprinted as part of An Octave of Friends (1891) a collection of short stories and sketches written in a rather more jocular style than her longer novels, she includes "Madame Dufour", a bitter-sweet tale very much along the lines of the de Montfort situation in Dundas, with the added attraction of a young lady detective.

Madame Caroline Dufour, a beautiful and mysterious Frenchwoman, moves into the English village idyll of Hinton, instantly capturing the imagination of the villagers and the heart of Walter Drummond, only son of the local vicar, thereby earning the enmity of his fiancée Kate Hyslop. Suspicious of the newcomer Kate begins to make enquiries; soon discovering that Dufour is really Clara Bell, actress, forger, escaped prisoner and "known bad character". Summoning a police detective from London, Kate engineers a confrontation in which the criminal is revealed and led away in handcuffs, all the while and "with unconscious pathos" pleading, in the manner of Madame de Montfort, "but I loved him!... Whatever I may be, I loved him!" Inevitably there is no satisfactory conclusion. Kate remains unmarried, ruling the village with a "rod of iron", an unsympathetic old maid, relentlessly vigilant and unremittingly virtuous. Drummond, hopeless and friendless spends his life searching the prisons, the streets and the fashionable London squares, but never finding his lost love; while she, "a wretched beggar-woman", dies of drink in the loneliness of a police cell, where they find hung around her neck a chestnut curl and the words 'Walter, My only real love. God bless him!' ”¹¹⁷

Few of Linton's texts offer a narrative of salvation; even integrity, honour, faithfulness and honesty are rarely enough to ensure present happiness or future fulfilment. Nevertheless, Linton suggests that it remains imperative for the progress of humanity that duty to the truth, even when it leads to tragedy, must remain paramount over all

¹¹⁷ "Madame Dufour," An Octave of Friends: With Other Silhouettes and Stories (1891) p. 235, 245, 248, 249-251. The frontispiece of the 1899 Chatto & Windus edition of An Octave of Friends carries a number of previous reviews, "Opinions of the Press on An Octave of Friends" including one from The Guardian which promises, "The love stories which fill up the volume are sufficiently lightly confected to occupy an idle hour without fear of any undue strain upon the emotions". The eight sketches and five stories that make up the volume were originally published in London Society in 1864, 1865, 1872 and 1873.

considerations. The death of Richard Fullerton is sanctified and his last words, “[R]efuse to believe a lie, my friends. If it cost you your lives, refuse”, serve as an admonishment to the reader to hold steadfast to the truth.¹¹⁸ Fullerton’s final words bring to mind the ones which Linton wrote to her sister when she first began the novel, writing “according to her conscience” and prepared to “bear the brunt” of her actions. As Fullerton dies his wife cannot help but compare the peacefulness and serenity of his death with the anguish and horror that characterized that of Theresa Molyneux:

It was a perplexing mystery to her for years to come when she remembered the agony and torment in which Theresa, a fervent catholic, had died after receiving the Blessed Sacrament and Absolution; while Richard, an infidel professing Agnosticism to the last, passed away with the serenity of Socrates or a saint already in glory.

UWL III. p. 304.

However, for readers more astute than the foolish Hermione, there is no “perplexing mystery”. Richard Fullerton’s atheist resolve is never compromised whereas Theresa Molyneux forfeited her future for a misplaced dedication to the falsehood and uncontrolled passion of religious conviction. Hermione asks herself the question:

Had she done well after all? She had given victory to the Church... Love, home, happiness, her husband and her child – these had been the forfeits claimed, the tribute cast into the treasury of the Lord under whom she had elected to serve. Had it been a holy sacrifice of the baser human affections to the nobler spiritual aspirations? or had it been the cruelty of superstition? the inhuman blindness of fanaticism?

UWL III. p. 308

Linton’s answer is unambiguous, and universal - in this Middle English, middle-class microcosm of national life, superstition and myth have triumphed over reason and logic, undermining the foundations of domestic harmony and destroying social stability.

¹¹⁸ Under Which Lord? III. p.303.

V. Divinities or Drawing Room Dummies: A Woman's Place is in the Home.

As a man of science, and despite his attempts to persuade his daughter of the “mad excesses [to which] superstitious fancy can lead mankind”, Richard Fullerton's freethinking, like Linton's, does not extend so far as to allow women a role beyond the domestic.¹¹⁹ He tells his wife:

‘Our life of harmony and oneness has not been tyranny on my side and submission on yours, but so perfect a welding together that our two wills have been one, needing only one voice to express and one action to embody. And that voice and action have naturally been mine, because I am the stronger man while you are the weaker and less experienced woman.’

UWL I. pp. 288-89

It is evident from Richard Fullerton's words that despite his liberality he concurs with social custom concerning where and with whom a wife's duty should lie. However, Fullerton does not on this occasion nor any other, demand his “right” to his wife's deference; rather he continues to believe in her capacity to do what he perceives as morally and socially appropriate, long after events have demonstrated it as unlikely. Always embedded within the text is an implicit criticism of Fullerton's apparent refusal to assert his natural right by demanding that Hermione reject the influence of the priest and acknowledge that his authority, as her husband, is paramount. Linton's narrative voice suggests that Fullerton has lost his wife's respect by not asserting his authority and demanding her obedience. Hermione, who “never respected her husband so much as when he made her understand that he did not respect her”, stands as emblematic of national womanhood. She was “a woman who needed a master, and with whom a certain amount of fear was wholesome” and Fullerton's ultimate failure is rooted in his unwillingness to make his wife fear him, as she does Lascelles.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Under Which Lord? I. p. 22.

¹²⁰ Ibid. III. p. 40. This also suggests that there are certain kinds of women, among whom Linton would surely include herself, who do not “need a master” let alone one who provokes fear. That Fullerton was entitled to his demand his ‘rights’ went without saying; that she had none other than those that her husband chose to grant and which could be withdrawn at will, was embedded in law. William Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England (1765) expounded the legal status of married women, that “the husband and wife are one person in law” and that the “legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of her husband: under whose wing, protection and cover, she performs everything;” See Katherine O'Donovan, “The Male

Richard Fullerton, regardless of his position as the novel's hero, is too complacent, too secure in his own world to be able to identify within his own family the potential for devastation that outside pressures can create. He fails to recognize his wife's growing restlessness and disaffection, believing that his own satisfaction is mirrored in his family. The portrayal of Hermione Fullerton's vague feelings of uneasy discontent must surely have struck a chord with a good many of her middle-class women readers.

Where her husband, suspecting no dissatisfaction and conscious of no want, lived in supreme content and happiness, tranquil, secure, but a little abstracted, a little pre-occupied, she began to silently eat out her heart, and to recognize that her life had a void of which she knew neither name nor the remedy.

Her husband? No woman could have one more tender in all essentials, more devoted, more faithful. If he spent long hours away from her, he had, as he said, his local duties to attend to which must be fulfilled. And she could scarcely grudge him the dry studies to which he had devoted himself, and for which she had no aptitude...though she silently resented the time given to them as time stolen from her...On his side indeed he might argue that she had her child, who was naturally to her what his studies were to him – her little Virginia growing up in docility and sweetness unsurpassable, and lovely enough to justify even a mother's idealizing admiration. She felt all this, if she did not put it into so many words; and she used to ask herself – with health, fortune, a faultless husband, a sweet and interesting child – how could she have a void? What was it? Why did she feel so lonely, so bereft as she did? – for in what blessing did she fail? She could not tell. Nevertheless, there it was; a fact as true as the rest.

UWL I. pp. 10-12

He does not see, as Lascelles does, his wife's restlessness, nor her inability to comprehend their daughter's need for guidance. Neither does he recognize their need for a focus to their lives that his scientific studies and his educational work provide in his own. When Hermione devolves stewardship to her husband she abdicates all responsibility for domestic duties; she neither desires nor is capable of participating in the day-to-day running of the home.

She was an indolent woman in every-day affairs; and as the housekeeper kept the books and overlooked the tradesmen's accounts on the one hand, and the milliner supplied her with all that she wanted and sent in the bill on the other, and her husband paid for everything by cheques, she had no need for more than the few loose shillings wanted for her visits to the poor; and she had not the

Appendage: Legal Definitions of Women" in The Woman Question: Readings on the Subordination of Women, Mary Evans (ed) Fontana, Oxford. 1982. pp. 344-362.

trouble or responsibility of keeping a purse, which she was always losing or mislaying.

UWL I. p. 51

The protestant work ethic of industry, self-help, fortitude, duty and responsibility, the characteristics of muscular Christianity that women could share with their manly superiors, was unknown to Hermione. Her complacency and indolence clearly connect her to Linton's notion of the lethargy of Catholicism, and simultaneously make her susceptible to its attractions.

Overprotected from the outside world, ill equipped and naïve, the Fullerton women are unaware of the perils to which the unsuspecting and ingenuous female can fall prey. The protection of the family, Linton appears to be suggesting, is a two edged sword. While the family serves as the foundation of personal and social stability, and the home women's natural station, it must not be the means of perpetuating female ignorance. Fullerton concedes that the church is a more natural environment for women than for men, that the nature of women, being more emotional and less rational, would find in religious observance a fulfilment that more logical and wiser men would naturally reject. He does not then condemn his wife and daughter's religious convictions, because such belief is womanly. His concern is rather that High Church Ritualism would demand from its female congregation a commitment that would undermine the authority of the family and that women would forget where their first duty should lie.

Under Which Lord? was not the first time Linton had turned her attention to the dilemma of restless and dissatisfied women. An article for the Saturday Review, "The Discontented Woman", focussed on what "would seem to be becoming an unpleasantly familiar type of character", women who demanded a more gratifying role than wife and mother. Characteristically this article was aimed at the unnatural women who demanded entrance to the male professions and whom Linton advised to "perfect themselves in the things which they do already before carrying their efforts into new fields". It does however acknowledge the dissatisfaction with their situation that many middle-class women were experiencing, although Linton does not go so far as to suggest that

women's sphere should extend beyond the domestic or that the answer lay outside the home.¹²¹

Women were not required to renounce religious faith, but it was obligatory that they adhere to an Anglican, that is English, model of worship. The broad middle ground, between the conflicting poles of High and Low church, was the only appropriate place for respectable English women, as Linton made explicit in an article for Temple Bar. In "Fuss and Feathers" Linton criticises both the "pretty [High Church] maiden", who attends church for love of ritual and ceremony rather than spirituality, and low-church female worshippers who feel compelled to "tear their hair, and hug their neighbours", in order to demonstrate their devotion.¹²² Neither compares to the unaffected spiritual honesty and quiet dignity of a Broad Church Anglican woman.

When lecturing in the reading room of his Working Men's Institute, Richard Fullerton warns "his men" that women will try to persuade them into subscribing to the vicar's new ways of worship, and that they must resist the temptation else risk emasculation.

You will be sought to be gained over to the church by the attractiveness of the services, by the zealousness of the minister, by the tears perhaps – the solicitations certainly – of your wives and daughters who will be won over without difficulty; and it will be a hard thing for you to make a stand. But if you go over you will lose the best birthright of your manhood; and the price you will pay for your reconciliation with falsehood and mental oppression will be your freedom and your intelligence.

UWL I. p. 191.

His use of military terminology makes apparent the hostile nature of the relationship between church and society. Women, who will be easily "won over" are the spoils of war, trophies to be claimed by one side or the other, "his men" the infantry who must be prepared to stand their ground in the face of a persuasive enemy. Linton's use of military terminology in describing the conflict between church and society recalls the

¹²¹ Linton, "The Discontented Woman" Saturday Review, Feb. 14, 1874. p. 205, in Social Essays, II. p. 285. Linton's depiction of Hermione Fullerton's longing for a fulfilling purpose to her life recognises the desires that drove the demands of the women's movement for a more active involvement in public life.

¹²² "Fuss and Feathers" Temple Bar, May 1866. p. 196. Linton was clearly not won over by George Eliot's sensitive characterisation of Evangelist Dinah Morris in Adam Bede (1859).

more familiar representations, as in Hughes' Manliness of Christ, of the advance of Christianity as a series of campaigns to be fought and won.

The patriarchal role of protector and a woman's duty to husband, home and family were, for the majority of middle-class Victorians, Linton included, overriding principles of family life, extending even into private worship. The proverbial image of the Victorian middle-class family and their servants, in a combination of dutiful devotion to both religious and domestic obligation, gathered together at family prayers is a familiar, if somewhat clichéd one.¹²³ Such prayers were most often encouraged and held at the request of wife and mother who assumed the role of leading parishioner. It was however the male head of the household if there was one, who led the service. By adopting the role of minister over family and servants, power remained entrusted to patriarchal authority, buttressed by both tradition and assent. Women's involvement in church led "good works", visiting the sick, subscribing to worthy causes, offering advice and guidance to the deserving poor, all were encompassed within the domestic sphere and as long as they were undertaken in the hours not occupied by household duties and did not interfere with a woman's family obligations, were allowable. The dangers of women looking beyond their local boundaries, even in good works had been amply, and ironically, explored in Dickens' Bleak House, where Mrs Jellyby devotes her life to the natives of Borrioboola-Gha, whilst Jo the crossing-sweeper, "not softened by distance", but devoured by "homely filth", "homely parasites" and "homely sores", "an ordinary home-made article", escapes the attention of the missionary-minded Jellyby, his proximity rendering him uninteresting.¹²⁴

Correspondingly, Fullerton, in concentrating his interest away from his own family, fails to notice, until it is too late that his attention was needed closer to home. His "life's endeavour was to weaken the hold of the Christian faith on the minds of men", and to this end he has built in the village a "philosophical institute", in which is housed a "working man's reading room, which he had stocked with a good library, of anti-religious character, and where he himself gave lectures and held classes, chiefly

¹²³ A letter from Linton to an unnamed recipient suggests that household prayers were a custom encouraged in Linton's Malvern household. Layard, p. 336.

¹²⁴ Charles Dickens, Bleak House (1852-3) Penguin, London. 1994. p. 588.

scientific and historical – whence he trusted that his audience would draw conclusions favourable to free-thought and hostile to the domination of the church”.¹²⁵ He believes in men’s ability to draw the right conclusions when they are given the appropriate guidance, which he provides with his library and his lectures and by his example. However, by concentrating his efforts on the wider community he is oblivious to the dangers closer to home until it is too late. His effort to weaken the hold of religious doctrine on the male community has left his family vulnerable to that doctrine’s fatal influence. Just as Hermione failed in her duty as a mother to support and protect their daughter, Fullerton has failed in his duty to protect his family from the corruption of outside influence.

As Hermione and Virginia Fullerton, and Theresa Molyneux, represent women who fail in their moral duty, the traditional view of appropriate female behaviour is underpinned by the women of the Nesbitt family who, in harmony with the patriarchal Mr Nesbitt, place family life in its proper place, above that of the church, and a husband and father’s authority over that of the clergy.

Mr Nesbitt did not approve of any scheme, how innocent soever in appearance, which might end by giving undue influence to the church; and unlike Richard Fullerton, he allowed no exercise of free-will in his family, but ruled his household as he thought best. And above all things he held to the belief that a woman’s duty lies at home and a wife’s honour in submission to her husband.

UWL I. p. 126

Mrs Nesbitt and her daughter Beatrice are appalled at what they identify as the defection of Hermione and Virginia Fullerton from home to church, Mrs Nesbitt defends her own position with “frank straightforwardness”, declaring:

‘I keep my dear children well and happy. I do not let them get into bad habits for want of my care, nor to be made unhappy by others; and I do as my husband wishes...I am of the old-fashioned school, and hold to the value of a wife’s obedience to her husband and a mother’s superintendence over her children.’

UWL I. p. 129

¹²⁵ Under Which Lord? I. p.191.

The women of the Nesbitt family are portrayed as eminently level-headed and far too sensible to be taken in by ecclesiastical guile. When Sister Agnes, “deftly concealing a well-bred sneer”, accuses Mrs Nesbitt of being overly obedient she cheerfully responds, “I hope so”. She dismisses the Sister’s attempts to influence her and the community’s domestic arrangements as “odd”, using the same term to reject the commands of church hierarchy, declaring, “all clerics are odd, and take liberties which no one else would dream of”, thereby unambiguously dismissing the church’s claim of ecclesiastical authority over the domestic as abnormal.¹²⁶ The Nesbitt family receive the appropriate reward for their common sense when daughter Beatrice, who is “just what she ought to be”, marries Virginia Fullerton’s would-be husband Ringrove Hardisty, Linton’s narrative voice leaving us in no doubt whose fate is the most desirable. Beatrice’s marriage is “surely a better ending to her girlhood than Virginia’s immolation or Theresa’s self-destruction – the one for devotional enthusiasm, the other for religious excess!”¹²⁷

However, in spite her own espousal of agnosticism, her criticism of the clergy and dismissal of religious doctrine as superstitious myth, Linton contended that society was not yet sufficiently civilized enough to abandon entirely the support that Christianity offered, arguing that the “weaker brethren”, by which she meant women, young people and the working classes (Joshua Davidson’s own working class origins notwithstanding) were not sufficiently equipped to cope with the intellectual challenges that a rejection of religious belief entailed, and so still required the moral check that the church provided. For this reason she maintained that children should grow up in the practice of Christian worship and that every individual should come to the truth through their own intellectual analysis rather than be brought up to unbelief. In a letter to “one who shall be nameless”, Linton explained her grounds for continuing to publicly support the established church whilst privately rejecting its doctrines.

To the young and ignorant some kind of positive faith is an *absolute necessity*, and the best philosophers, who have thought out the matter with long and anxious care, will say the same thing. You call me ‘mad’ and all sorts of injurious things, because I recognize this and do all I can to strengthen the faith

¹²⁶ *Under Which Lord?* I. pp. 128-9.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* III. p. 250.

– and with the faith – the practising my ignorant servants in the Christian religion – concealing from them my own unbelief as a thing with which they have nothing to do – a thing which concerns my own self only. As a member of the community I feel bound to support so far openly the Established Church. All my intelligent friends here know the real truth, and some of them are in exactly the same state as myself – unbelievers in the *mythology*, but conformists outwardly for the sake of the weaker brethren– and those who have children for the sake of the children.¹²⁸

She warns her anonymous recipient that, “the very worst injury you can inflict on your children” is to destroy their faith in Christianity, when “you have nothing better to give them”. To remove the restraints of religion would be to destroy “one of the strongest incentives that man has to be virtuous and to abstain from vice”, and would be to “throw open the doors to every kind of sinful excess”. She is not, she says, a moral coward but she would not have the moral strength to bear such a responsibility.¹²⁹ Given that the “weaker brethren” were not yet intellectually or morally prepared for the next stage in rational advancement it was the duty of all right thinking people to suppress their personal beliefs for the greater good of society as a whole rather than to attempt to instil a philosophy which the general populace would fail to understand and that would prove to be morally and socially destructive.

It was however somewhat disingenuous of Linton to claim that her agnosticism was a private matter when she was well known, and often criticised for her religious iconoclasm; a reputation earned to a great extent by her critical representations of unsympathetic clerics, of whom Launcelot Lascelles is the most abhorrent, and her favourable treatment of unbelievers, often, like Fullerton, paragons of moral strength.

Statistics on religious observance cannot in themselves provide evidence of the nation’s degree of spirituality, nor can they be used with any certainty to ascertain levels of belief, but it is implausible that church going was entirely a matter of social propriety unconnected with personal conviction. For the majority of Victorian worshippers church attendance was the outward manifestation of an implicit religious faith. Nevertheless,

¹²⁸ Linton to unknown recipient, n.d. (c. Dec. 1897) Layard, pp. 334 -336. Layard took it upon himself to censor much of Linton’s correspondence so the addressee is not known; the contents suggest that he did so in order not to make public the receiver’s atheism.

¹²⁹ Ibid. pp. 334-335.

Linton was by no means unique in continuing to maintain a façade of conventional religious observance despite the lack of any religious belief. Thomas Hardy continued to attend church services even after he had abandoned faith. McLeod cites the anonymous interviewee of an oral history project undertaken by Essex University, identified only as “the daughter of a Duke, West London” reporting that her father “led a conventional religious life and attended church”, even though he held no religious belief, adding that there was “no question” of her not being christened and confirmed because that was “conventional”. Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, brother of Leslie, regularly accompanied his children to church and held family prayers despite his own scepticism.¹³⁰ Linton herself continued to attend the occasional church service, and as the above letter demonstrates, maintained a custom of household prayers. She recorded that while helping to nurse her sister Rose, who was then in the final stages of a long illness, the strain became too much and that while in church, “I broke down at one of the hymns and *sobbed*”.¹³¹ Ringrove Hardisty and many of Fullerton’s men also attend church services, participating in the traditional events of the church calendar, such as harvest celebrations, whilst not necessarily adhering to its concomitant doctrine. Their observance is not depicted as insincere or hypocritical; rather they are seen as upholding the traditions of English parochial life. In addition, the moral values promulgated by established religion: self-help, thrift, hard work and devotion to duty, were those approved and disseminated by middle-class Victorian society as the means of realizing an honourable and successful life. Therefore church going also represented an adherence to, and promulgation of, what have come to be seen as archetypal Victorian “virtues”.

Christian values, if not Christian belief, as typified by her anti-theist heroes, remained central to Linton’s own credo and were paramount in her perception of the route by which society would continue to advance. Indeed if society were to progress at all it was imperative that it should recognise that religious belief served to inhibit human development. Linton’s adolescent revelation, “Man – not God”, emerges continually throughout her work as anti-religious sentiment. To hold to religious faith was to cling

¹³⁰ McLeod, p. 21. Annan, p. 159.

¹³¹ Layard p.272. This reveals that Linton was not immune to the emotional release that a religious atmosphere could provoke.

to an indeterminate and externally directed imperative, it was an abdication of personal and individual responsibility that satisfied only the weak and the unresolved. Logical and intellectually vigorous manly men, and the “exceptional sort” of woman, reject faith as a superstitious myth that functioned as a check to moral, material and intellectual development.

Fundamental to any Linton text, no matter how sensational some of its episodes may have been, was integrity, not only the personal integrity of its protagonists but also the society in which they lived, the circumstances of their lives and the social order which they represented. It was Linton’s contention that anti-Catholicism, opposition to established religion and the development of agnosticism were all part of a rational and ethical continuum of which she was in the forefront, but one on which the majority of people were still lagging a long way behind. Thus, the moral check of faith was essential for the “weaker brethren” who had yet to develop the strength of character necessary to sever the connection between morality and religion.

Women too, as a consequence of their intellectual inferiority and moral and emotional susceptibility, were not yet equipped to decline the prop that the church provided. In Christianity, Linton argued, were “enshrined the special characteristics” of the female sex. It was Linton’s contention that faith was shifting and inconsistent, based on emotion not reason and privileged the desires of the individual over the needs of society. Thus, gender was fundamental to religious belief; the very features that made women inherently passive and submissive to male authority made them naturally susceptible to the attractions of the church.¹³² If religious belief was inevitable then it was imperative that it must be founded in the Anglican, Broad Church, un-dogmatic and above all English paradigm that did not set out to subvert the English way of life or undermine the importance of home and family.

The nature of the society in which she lived and the pressures to which she believed it was exposed provided the impetus for all of Linton’s work, fiction and non-fiction, and an adherence to the truth and a drive to do what she considered was morally right

¹³² See Appendix II.

impelled her work. She was, as she was later to remind Thomas Huxley, a “woman of the bread-winning class”, and she earned her bread by writing for and reflecting the world in which she lived. The fact that she often attracted public condemnation for the situations she represented does not mean that such situations did not in fact exist, if not *in actua* then *in potentia*. The issues with which her work was most concerned were inevitably predicated on her own anxieties and those of her contemporaries, and that she felt it was her duty to address. She was not however blind to the difficulties that such a course of action presented, difficulties that are reflected in the pattern of her narratives, which seldom ended happily even for the heroes of the piece.

Linton’s own search for what she perceived as spiritual and intellectual truth, was explored in Christopher Kirkland, a text which, as an exposition of Linton’s life is often characterised, in her own terms as one of “loneliness and loss”, in which her “moral investments” resulted in “more fairy gold than substantial treasure”.¹³³ Anderson suggests that the price that Linton paid for her loss of faith was “an increased feeling of aloneness in a cold unfeeling world”.¹³⁴ Yet, rather than a negative experience Linton seems to have found it liberating. Her final rebuttal brought her an overwhelming feeling of relief and served to persuade her that whatever was to happen in the future, whether good or bad, was her own responsibility; that she was answerable only to her own conscience and her own moral philosophy. Her conclusion, that, “by the law under which I live and suffer I have to work out my difficulties for myself”, was a sentiment shared by an ever-growing number of intellectual Victorians, and for Linton the means of “working out” those difficulties was to be found not in religion but in science.¹³⁵

¹³³ Kirkland III. p. 308.

¹³⁴ Anderson, Woman against Women, p. 29.

¹³⁵ Kirkland III. p. 139.

Science

“When we weary of the sterile things of the world, we have always the rich and fertile fields of science for our rest and refreshment.”

By the middle of the century the great Victorian tradition of exploration, investigation and analysis had turned its attention to scientific enquiry. Inevitably this research provoked many more questions than it answered. Significant developments in geology, biology, physics and anthropology had all served to cast doubt upon the validity of previously held beliefs and every social or political history of the Victorian era worthy of note dedicates a significant proportion of its attention to examining the challenges that changes in philosophical and scientific thought were offering to religious orthodoxy.¹ What these texts tell us is that one of the issues most fundamental to Victorian thought was the questioning of previously held belief in the infallibility of the bible, the intellectual autonomy of the clergy, the church's authority over national institutions, even the existence of God at all. As we have already seen, the increase in the number and variety of religious groups is testimony to the fact that the established churches were failing to fulfil the spiritual needs of a rapidly changing society. Furthermore, as scientific investigation began to focus not only on the physical world but to reconsider mankind's location in relation to it, it was perceived by many Linton included, as offering an alternative credo, a substitute system in which morality was founded on a duty to humanity rather than to a deity and one in which the function of society was to improve the fate of man in this world rather than offering the promise of happiness in the next.

I. Science versus Religion: Linton's Advocacy of Science.

As has been established, much of Linton's work explored the crises of faith that assailed both individual and society and, if in certain aspects she appeared ambivalent or

¹ Arranged by subject, Walter Houghton's The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830-1870 (1957) though now nearly half a century old is still offers a valuable and comprehensive insight into the age, as is A N Wilson's much more recent, chronologically organized, The Victorians, Hutchinson, London. 2002.

contradictory, she was largely reflecting the divergent tensions that beset the society in which she lived. One of the most significant of those tensions was that between science and religion. Linton's depiction of conflict within and between the religious establishments and the men who represented them was chiefly predicated on where and with whom authority should lie. We have seen how, in Under Which Lord? for example, the consequences of an internalised battle for authority over the contested ground of the domestic locale leads to the destruction of that microcosm of society, home and family. By means of an examination of Linton's exploration of her notion of the irreconcilable forces of science and religion it is possible to see how she then externalises that domestic conflict, characterising it as a struggle between forces of the advanced truth of science and the backward looking mythology of religion for the right to determine hegemonic control. From her position on the cusp of an era that saw a shifting focus on the applications and implications of scientific enquiry and a radical transformation in the status of scientists themselves, Linton identified in science an authority to which pursuit of truth was of paramount and over-riding importance and whose findings would irrevocably dispel the esoteric and transcendental myth of religious belief, heralding a new and vital stage in the evolution of mankind.²

For perhaps the majority there was no perceived conflict between science and religion; the many wonders that scientific advance was revealing were comprehended as evidence of God's magnificence and a concordat between the two disciplines was unproblematic; others however were less sanguine. A growing enthusiasm for psychic investigation and the popular appeal of spiritualism in the latter part of the century was symptomatic of an underlying desire to achieve a compromise between scientific discovery and religious faith. In addition, the escalation of interest in the supernatural

² For the nineteenth-century scientist science itself was concerned not only with the systematic study of the nature and behaviour of the natural and material world, but importantly how to identify the means of bringing natural phenomena under man's control. Science encompassed, then as now, the pursuit of "demonstrated truths, or observed facts, systematically classified and more or less comprehended by general laws, and which include reliable methods for the discovery of new truth in its own domain" but it also carried a wider and more far reaching philosophical meaning. It was not until the mid century that the term "scientist" replacing the more usual "natural philosopher", began to enter the lexicon. The Oxford English Dictionary cites two examples from 1840 as the first references to its use, "We need very much a name to describe a cultivator of science in general. I should incline to call him a scientist"; William Whewell Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences, and in Blackwood's Magazine, XLVIII, (p. 273) in a reference that also foregrounds Linton's perception of science, "Leonardo was mentally a seeker after truth-a scientist". "Science", Shorter Oxford English Dictionary 1993.

and the mystical that was a feature of the era was also indicative of the failure of mainstream religion to satisfy the spiritual needs of an ever more restless and discontented population. For some however there could be no compromise between science and religion. Science meant much more than demonstrable and verifiable facts and general principles; it was also tangible evidence that progress, the continued civilization and advancement of the human race, was absolutely dependent on the rejection of religious belief. For Linton, science and its advocates were invested with the combined responsibility of separating mankind from its superstitious and primitive past, propelling it into a rational and civilised future and furnishing the means of realising social and moral perfection.

The contested ground over which the Scientific Law versus God's Law battle raged has been explored in a number of canonical texts; inevitably the work of Eliza Lynn Linton has not figured amongst them.³ Her intense and often contradictory writing on all aspects of the woman question, coupled with her often extreme didacticism has had the effect of obscuring the possibility that she may offer a means of access to and disclosure of other aspects of the society in which she lived. Always outspoken and highly critical of women's rights and its representatives, even before the end of her career she was in some ways considered anachronistic; her outmoded opinions regarding the position of women in society were often seen as antiquated and no longer relevant to late nineteenth-century society. Given then that her extreme stance provoked hostility and invited contradiction from even the more reactionary critics, let alone those sympathetic to the causes she habitually condemned, it is perhaps not surprising that Linton has, hitherto, gone largely unnoticed as an important means of access into other aspects of her time. However, I contend that to dismiss her and her work as irrelevant or

³ As an "under-read Victorian," (Barbara Leah Harman, & Susan Meyer (eds) The New Nineteenth Century: Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction, Garland, New York, 1996) Linton's contribution to the "science question" debate, in either fiction or in her journalism, has hitherto gone largely unnoticed. Even in her lifetime Linton's novels did not enjoy the popularity for which she hoped, and believed she deserved and as the title of Harman and Meyer's study suggests, since her death she has received limited attention from academics, rarely figuring as more than a curiosity and an interesting footnote. There are of course notable exceptions. The scholarly work of Nancy Anderson, Valerie Sanders, Deborah Meem, Barbara Onslow and others, continue to reclaim Linton as an important literary and historical figure.

unrepresentative is to discount an important exposition into one of the key issues of the period, that of the centrality of science in a rapidly evolving society.

An examination of Linton's fiction and her autobiographical writing, together with her journalism, offers a valuable insight into a number of key features of both the author and her era. Linton's methods of engagement evolved and adapted in keeping with her social and literary environment and within her work can be identified contemporary reaction to changes in scientific thought and her own attempts, as a commercial writer, to respond to that change. Her writing also offers the opportunity to trace the history of the development of science in the nineteenth-century from the perspective of an enthusiastic outsider, giving new insight into the professionalisation of science, the scientific world's response to gender and to the issue of women's rights and the consequent impact each were to have on women's relationship with and access to scientific knowledge. An analysis of Linton's work demonstrates the often elaborate tactics that, as a woman writer, she was compelled to employ in order to engage with and in scientific debate.

II. The Status of Women in Science and Linton's Early Voice.

Linton was not a scientist any more than she was a theologian; what she was, like many of her middle-class peers was an interested layperson, although unlike the majority of her contemporaries she had access to the means of informing and influencing public opinion, an access that she rarely failed to utilize. She was however faced with a predicament. Religion was considered an area of national life in which women had a role to play and in which they were permitted, to a certain extent, to have a voice. Indeed, it was often through religious discourse that women writers were able to claim a public space in which they could frame their reactions and to respond to social issues, and through which they could play out the tensions they experienced in their own lives. Linton's agnosticism did not exclude her from religious discourse, though it did disqualify her from some of the most powerful roles open to women at that time. As Martha Vicinus has pointed out, participation in religious movements and organisations

often afforded women a means of responding to, and accessing public arenas hitherto closed to female admission.⁴ Linton's stance as a freethinker effectively cut her off from the possibilities of these female communities, although, despite her assertion that she was a representative woman "of the bread winning class" it is unlikely that Linton would have desired inclusion into such communities anyway.

Linton may then have been criticised for what she wrote about religious matters but it remained within the bounds of propriety for her to write it, her position on the "science question" was much more problematic. No matter how disagreeable or didactic her opinions on religious issues may have seemed they remained suitable subjects on which to focus her attention and it continued to be permissible for her to make her views known. Scientific discourse did not offer the same freedom or opportunity. The strategies that Linton applied in order to maintain a presence in the debates from which her sex should naturally have excluded her, offer not only a valuable channel of admission into the anxieties and complacencies of the age itself but also expose the means by which they could be and were manipulated. A number of key texts, all written with her habitual intensity, keenly reveal Linton's simultaneous inclusion and isolation from what she identified as the intellectual heart of her age, amongst which is included a private letter protesting against the exclusion of women from the meetings of the Ethnological Society. Written in 1868 and housed in the Huxley archive this letter serves as an exceptional and "symbolically neglected" testimony to the position of women with relation to science in the mid-nineteenth century.⁵ It might be added that its neglect is also symbolic of that afforded its writer, whose extensive and hitherto under-researched body of work offers a significant historical and literary exposition of her age.

During the first half of the nineteenth-century the enormous rise in the popularity and interest in science amongst all sections of society, but especially among the middle-class, gave rise to a new intellectual elite through whom the practical and philosophical

⁴ Martha Vicinus, Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920, Virago, London. 1985. Ch. 2.

⁵ Evelleen Richards, "Huxley and woman's place in science: The 'woman question' and the control of Victorian anthropology" History, Humanity and Evolution, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1989. p. 255. Joan N. Burstyn, Education and the Ideal of Womanhood, Croom Helm, London. 1980 quotes briefly from Linton's letter to illustrate the difficulties experienced by women who wish to "discuss serious matters in mixed company". p. 44.

consequences of changing scientific thought were disseminated to the general public. By the middle of the century the discipline had a number of key spokesmen through whom scientific thought was mediated; the inevitable outcome of which was that science increasingly ceased to be an amateur interest and became a profession. It was therefore essential that, as in all other professional institutions, women should be prohibited. There had been several women scientists in the nineteenth-century who were much admired and who delivered learned papers to the various scientific societies. Both Mary Somerville and Caroline Herschel had been elected to the Royal Astronomical Society in 1835 in recognition of their scientific work, but their membership remained honorary. No matter how erudite women's contribution or respected their scholarship, scientific debate remained largely closed to female access. Women scientists were regarded as exceptional, as indeed they were, although not in the sense that cultural commentators of the time meant. Successful female scientists were either lauded for their "man's brain" their achievements attained despite the "deficiencies" of their gender, or they were held up as models of domestic superwomen whose scientific labours were achieved in parallel with their exemplary household management.⁶ In reality what made them exceptional was that they began and continued in their research despite the myriad of social mechanisms that colluded to exclude women from the resources that made scientific study possible. Without access to the educational amenities that encouraged research and barred from the associations and societies in which an exchange of ideas was made possible, female scientists needed extraordinary levels of determination simply to embark on such a route, let alone succeed. Moreover, no matter what their gender, scientists also needed the economic resources to support their work, so that a woman needed to be of independent means or from a family both willing and able to support her in her endeavours to be able to attempt it at all.

Even then a supportive environment was not without its drawbacks; as Margaret Alic points out, many practical women scientists, dependent on fathers, brothers or husbands for training and support were "in constant danger of having their work attributed to their

⁶ In the literary world Linton was often described in similar terms; Mrs. Alec Tweedie commented that Linton was possessed of "a man's brain coupled with a woman's tenderness". "A Chat with Mrs. Lynn Linton" *Temple Bar*, July 1894. p. 355. Samuel Smiles was complimenting her when he called her "the most manly of her sex." Layard, p. 260.

male colleagues". Female scientists were faced with a cultural double bind, they could publish their work under a male pseudonym in order that their research would be taken seriously, even though they would not get the credit for it, or they could publish in their own name and risk accusations of both intellectual and moral shortcomings. With their work thought flawed by reason of their gender and their reputation undercut by accusations of un-womanliness, radicalism or immodesty it is not surprising that few women scientists "were willing to jeopardise their social position or go against the dictates of propriety in order to receive credit for their work".⁷ Female scholars also faced the anomalous circumstance that even when they did gain recognition for their achievements they suffered a reverse emasculation in which their gender was not so much neutered as transposed in order that science remained a masculine preserve. Thus when reviewing Mary Somerville's On the Connection of the Physical Sciences (1834) the scientist William Whewell could consistently refer to "men of science" and to the scientific philosopher and practitioner as "he" without apparent incongruity.⁸ When she was a young woman Linton had met Whewell and had attempted to discuss with him the challenges that she felt science offered to religious belief, Whewell, who saw no opposition between the two spheres, dismissed her misgivings with "a satirical smile" and the terse observation "sceptic and septic – there is only the difference of one letter between them".⁹

There were certain conditions in which women were permitted to speak on scientific matters, in order for example, as in Linton's 1885 article "Pasteur's Life and Labours", to laud male achievement. A review article, derivative rather than innovative, was a fitting vehicle for a female writer. Certain of the natural sciences, botany for example, were also regarded as an acceptable preoccupation for women of the middle and upper

⁷ Margaret Alic, Hypatia's Heritage, The Woman's Press, London. 1986. pp. 10-11. In addition, society was often reluctant to accept that the work of women scientists was their own. At the beginning of the twentieth century Marie Curie's discovery of radium was wrongly attributed to her husband, prompting her friend and fellow scientist Hertha Ayrton to comment, "an error that ascribes to a man what was actually the work of a woman has more lives than a cat". Westminster Gazette, 14 March 1909, in Dr. Paula Gould, British Society for History of Science conference paper, "The Use of Role Models to Promote Women's Work in Science" July 2000.

(www.bsbs.org.uk/conf/2000sciencecomm/papers/gould.doc)

⁸ William Whewell, review of Mary Somerville's "On the Connection of the Physical Sciences" Quarterly Review Vol. 51, 1834. p. 59 in Science and Literature in the Nineteenth Century, J.A.V. Chapple, Macmillan, Basingstoke. 1986. p. 2.

⁹ Kirkland I. pp. 124 -125.

classes and it is a cliché of the age that presents an image of the muslin clad young lady collecting and pressing flowers for display, working fine embroidery of pastoral scenes or dabbling with watercolour representations of botanical specimens. (Watercolours, as Mrs. Ward mischievously reminds us in Robert Elsmere are “so much more lady-like than oils”).¹⁰ However, as in many clichés there is more than a germ of truth and in this representation of women replicating or preserving aspects of nature can be seen the apotheosis of belief in the nature of women not as producer but as reproducer. It remained outside women’s place to create (save as a mother), initiate or question, her role was embedded in cultural tradition as cipher not constructor and though the eulogising of male scientific accomplishment was an appropriate area for female attention, the study of science remained suitable for men alone.

As has already been discussed, much of what we know about Eliza Lynn Linton is derived from The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland and from Layard’s 1901 biography. The former, written toward the end of the nineteenth-century and the latter at the beginning of the twentieth, discuss Linton’s keen interest in the philosophy of science and in its practical application as a means of advancing human progress. Nevertheless there is much evidence in her early writing which demonstrates that her deep interest in science began at an early age. Indeed, a number of articles, written in the early years of her journalistic career reveal that, albeit in a small way, Linton was herself was a “torch-bearer” in the advance of science, and of evolutionary theory, and her first scientific essays pre-date Origin of Species (1859).¹¹

In a series of pieces for the National Magazine Linton elucidates and endorses scientific advance. These essays discuss the practical application of science to improve individual and national well-being and the qualitative and quantitative benefits that society was experiencing through scientific innovation. But they also discuss the less definable and more elusive changes that society was undergoing as a result of shifting models of

¹⁰ Mrs. Humphry Ward, Robert Elsmere (1888) Garland, London. 1976. Vol. I. p. 20. Women painters and illustrators excelled in this field. Mrs. William Buckland’s fossils, Anne Pratt’s ferns and wild flowers, Beatrix Potter’s fungi, and particularly the ornithological illustrations of Mrs. Gould who drew the plates for her husband’s Birds of Europe, all “stand comparison” with the best male work. Lynn Barber, The Heyday of Natural History, 1820-1870 Jonathan Cape, London. 1980, p. 126. Marianne North’s use of oils as a medium for her paintings of flower subjects is an exception.

¹¹ Charles Darwin, On the Origin of Species, John Murray, London. 1859.

belief. Written in a discursive style, the tone of these pieces is instructive while remaining accessible. Public commissions, published investigations, changes in legislation and the work of various social reform movements had all resulted in a much greater public interest and awareness of issues of public health, and Linton's articles sought to draw on and inform those debates.¹² These review essays, making use of lately published works, take the opportunity to enthusiastically approve the work of various scientists and to explain not only the material benefits that their work advance, but also the intellectual and philosophical rewards that such research affords. "The Drop of Water", based on the work of a Dr Sanders, considered the necessity and the benefits of clean water but also describes water as the force "which informs the world", a thing so familiar and yet which exemplifies "the most important cosmic laws" and from which order can be ascertained from what "seemed to be but complicated mystery".¹³ "The Air of Towns" and "Our Chemical Friends" both consider improvements in living standards that advances in chemical science had brought about, emphasising that chemical experiments produce scientific evidence of what endangers the health of the nation and provide the means of alleviating that danger. Linton's proposition is that scientific evidence presents an empirical truth that cannot be ignored and which must be acted upon. But chemistry also drives out superstition, it is the "wizard and enchanter" of the nineteenth century, that fascinatingly reveals the essence of matter.¹⁴

In "Our Progress" she discusses the ways in which science provides explanations for what hitherto had been regarded as witchcraft or superstition. Giving the example of the recognition of diabolical possession as the manifestation of mental illness she states that thanks to science "we have retreats and hospitals where formerly fires were lighted round the stake", before continuing with an extensive list of modern scientific substitutes for the "old ways" such as the "electric telegraph for beacon fires". The

¹² Edwin Chadwick's shocking "Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain" (July 1842) for example, led to the 1848 Public Health Act, an ineffectual but much needed step toward improving the sanitary condition of the nation.

¹³ Linton, "The Drop of Water" National Magazine, Dec. 1857. p. 128.

¹⁴ Linton "The Air of Towns" National Magazine Sept. 1859. "Our Chemical Friends" National Magazine Nov. 1858. p.36.

article concludes by posing, and answering the question, “Is not faith in the steady progress of humanity the first and mightiest truth? We believe it to be so”.¹⁵ Similarly, in “The Unities of Nature” Linton asserts “life has been a series of developments, beginning with the lowest, and now culminating in the highest that we know of.” This premise of the progress of humanity through science is one that occupied Linton throughout her life and, as will be discussed later, is one to which she returned often in her work. Beginning with a discussion of geological evolution she also notes that it is not only physiological development that is evolutionary but also models of society, law, custom and culture. Paraphrasing Herbert Spencer she notes “all forms of written language, of painting, and of sculpture have a common root in the politico-religious decorations of ancient temples and palaces” and continues that “nothing belonging to us rose up full grown”. She identifies the beginnings of theocracy in “the medicine man of the savage”, constitutional monarchy in “the strength of the warrior brave” and the language of Shakespeare in “the guttural mono-syllable of savage calling to savage”. Linton’s observations on the connection between theocracy and witchcraft prefigure her later, more explicit, association of religion with superstition, such as in Witch Stories, and she makes her own allegiance clear by her stated belief “in the divinity of the law of progress”.¹⁶

The National Magazine was aimed at a readership whose interests included scientific subjects and in addition to Linton’s articles, it included a regular “Progress of Science” column alongside its other eclectic mix of stories, discussions and reviews, to which Linton also contributed. Other subjects included: fungi, the replacement of traditional English horticultural names with Latin ones, glass technology (including the improvement of spectacles, a subject dear to the myopic Linton’s heart), history,

¹⁵ Linton, “Our Progress” National Magazine, Dec. 1857, pp. 110-112. Linton’s contributions to the National Magazine began in October 1857 and continued until September 1859. Those published before her marriage in March 1858 were assigned to E.L. and those after to E.L.L., to avoid confusion I have continued to refer to her as Linton throughout.

¹⁶ Linton, “The Unities of Nature” National Magazine, Nov. 1858. pp. 52-57. While acknowledging that she was drawing on the work of Herbert Spencer Linton does not refer to a specific title. Spencer’s The Principles of Psychology was published in 1855 and two essays “Progress: its Law and Cause” Westminster Review, April 1857 and “The Ultimate Laws of Physiology” National Review, Oct. 1857 are most likely to have informed Linton’s own essay.

folklore and food.¹⁷ As a commercial journalist Linton wrote for her market, tailoring her writing to the editorial policy of the periodical for which she was working. Nevertheless, as will be demonstrated, an analysis of subsequent work reveals that science was an area in which Linton had an abiding interest and which she consistently endorsed as the means of achieving human progress and with which she systematically engaged.

Linton's concept of a progression from the "lower" to the "higher" was not novel, rather it was a hypothesis that a number of intellectual Victorians, drawing on recent research and speculations had begun to explore. Nevertheless, it was soon after the publication of "The Unities of Nature" that the premise of evolutionary theory received endorsement by the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species. Origin's theories provided a rational explanation for hitherto unanswered questions and Linton's ready acceptance of its theories was replicated in many areas of contemporary society. Linton was aware that evolutionary theory was still in its infancy and she remained open to the possibility that a more appropriate model might yet be found, nevertheless she was more comfortable with its implications than with any other. Though it remained a theory and was "of course, imperfect in parts as all theories are, this view of the original unities of nature and of life seems more satisfying to the intellect than any other theory or hypothesis we have yet had."¹⁸

Indeed, in the reports of what has come to be seen as one of the most important (and probably best known) debates between the proponents and opponents of evolutionary theory as it related to the origins of man, Linton's assertion above is repeated in almost identical terms. In this debate the opposing ranks lined up at a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in July 1860. The two sides were headed by Thomas Huxley for the evolutionists, and Samuel Wilberforce, the Bishop of Oxford, for the creationists. Those present were to hear a paper, "On the Intellectual Development of Europe, considered with Reference to the Views of Mr. Darwin and

¹⁷ Linton, "Maligned Agarics" Nov. 1857; "Flower Gossip" Oct. 1858; "Glass" Feb. 1858; "The Maiden Country" March 1859; "Ancient Scottish Superstitions" Oct. Nov. 1857; "Cooked and Eaten" Jan. 1859: All National Magazine.

¹⁸ Linton, "The Unities of Nature" p. 57.

others, that the Progression of Organisms is determined by Law". The debate that followed was recorded in The Athenaeum, which reported that Professor Huxley had argued: "Without asserting that every part of [Darwin's] theory had been confirmed, he maintained that it was the best explanation of the origin of the species which had yet been offered".¹⁹

Pre-Darwinian scientists were often drawn from the ranks of the English clergy, but as the Huxley v Wilberforce debate indicates, science was proving to be divisive in more ways than one. The very nature of the scientific community was undergoing change, ceasing to be the province of the enthusiastic amateur and quickly becoming professionalised. If science was to have credibility as a profession it was thus imperative that, as in all other professional institutions, women should be excluded.²⁰ In addition, as science began to interrogate previously held religious assumptions it polarised scientific society into those whose religious belief was able to accommodate new evolutionary theories and those who saw such theories as incontrovertible proof of the non-existence of a divine creator. Linton's allegiance lay firmly with the agnostic Huxley, despite the fact that he was later to prove a disappointment to her own scientific aspirations.

III. The Professional Scientist: The Exclusion of Women from his Society/ties and Linton's petition for access to the "Court of Paradise".

As women's scientific work became increasingly devalued female access to the various scientific institutions became even more tightly controlled than previously, a situation that was exacerbated by the publication of Origin of Species. Origin has been called

¹⁹ The Athenaeum, July 14, 1860 Reproduced in Kauvar & Sorenson (eds.) The Victorian Mind, Cassell, London. 1968. p. 256. Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) English biologist, foremost among the new "professional" scientists and leading populariser of science, vigorous defender of evolutionary theory and creator of the term "agnostic".

²⁰ Barber, pp. 131-135. Frank M. Turner, "The Victorian Conflict between Science and Religion: A Professional Dimension" Isis, Vol. 69. 1978. Although Turner is chiefly concerned with the exclusion of clergymen from scientific institutions much of his argument is also relevant to women's position. See also Alic, pp. 1-11.

“the climax of the assault on established beliefs”²¹ and although it is certainly true that this celebrated text served to encourage the growth of religious insecurity, its theories were very often employed not to assault the “established beliefs” of female inferiority but to reinforce them, not least because of the enormous impetus, and credibility that its publication gave to anthropology. Darwin’s evolutionary hypotheses were taken up and used to support the argument that women were intellectually incapable of scientific creativity and that those women who attempted to enter the masculine world of science were therefore either deviant or defiant. Evolutionary theory was also utilised to offer empirical evidence of women’s inherent inferiority, offering a scientifically legitimated defence of the notion of female vulnerability and women’s supposed susceptibility to moral corruption.²² This in turn authorised men’s claim of a duty of protection over women, reinforcing the notion of separate spheres and biological determinism and underpinning women’s idealised function of domestic goddess as eulogised in Coventry Patmore’s popular tribute to married love “The Angel in the House”(1854-1860).²³

It was held that not only was science an unfit subject for women to study but that it was beyond female understanding. The new men of science determined that not only were women to be protected from science, but that science was to be protected from women.²⁴ Anthropology was not merely considered an unacceptable subject for women, it was also judged to offer proof of women’s innate inferiority and therefore an intellectual justification for the cultural mores of women’s domestic confinement and

²¹ Anthony Wood, *Nineteenth Century Britain: 1815-1914* (1960) Longman, London. 1982. p. 192.

²² Linton did not ever explicitly make the connection between evolutionary theory and female inferiority, although it may have been what she had in mind when she told her sister Lucy that she thought women “monkeyish”. Her criticism of “modern women” may have received endorsement, conscious or otherwise, from anthropology but Linton did not refer to it directly.

²³ Patmore admired Linton’s work and in 1870 he wrote to her suggesting that her direct and forthright work addressed a contemporary readership, on the issue of women’s place in society, in a way that he felt his no longer did. “You can do, and you prove, what I have striven and failed to do in my verse – I admire your self-control even more than your indignation. If I were to try to write my thoughts in prose, it would be a shriek and not an articulate protest, like yours”. Coventry Patmore to Linton, Oct. 31 1870, in Layard, p. 164. This demonstrates that while her views angered many, by no means all Linton’s contemporaries found them unacceptable. Patmore was one of many of Linton’s contemporaries whose religious anxiety was characterised by doctrinal conversion, in his case from Anglican to Catholic. (See “Religion” I.).

²⁴ An “old man” of science, the geologist Sir Charles Lyell was not so reductive. In his will he had left a scientific bequest, open to recipients irrespective of nationality or sex and which, in order to make the application criteria as inclusive as possible was not to be awarded by competitive examination. An article in *The Queen* applauds Lyell’s “liberality of thought,” though it dryly notes that the “facilities for study recently offered to women have hardly been such as would lead them to pursue physical science”. “The Scientific Education of Women,” *The Queen*, April 3 1875. p.219.

their exclusion from the mechanisms of public life. In addition it claimed to offer evidence of the unnatural deviancy of women who sought to expand women's rights. The Anthropological Review of June 1869 prefaced a report of a debate "On the Real Differences in the Minds of Men and Women" with a reminder of a paper given in the January of the previous year, in which it was agreed that:

In the normal condition of things, women's mission is not merely to bring forth children and to suckle them, but to attend to their early education; whilst the father must provide for the subsistence of the family. Everything that affects this normal order necessarily induces a perturbation in the evolution of races; and hence it follows that the condition of women in society must be carefully studied by the anthropologist.²⁵

The paper's presenter, J. McGriggor Allan, then underlines the right of science to be heard on the 'woman question'. Women's Rights were, he asserted, "a challenge to anthropologists to consider the scientific question of women's mental, moral and physical qualities, her nature and normal condition *relative to man*".²⁶ Stating that after fifteen year's diligent research he has reached the conclusion that "physically, mentally and morally, woman is a kind of adult child", he then goes on to offer a number of scientific proofs of women's innate inferiority (although as the paper progresses its tone becomes increasingly less scientific and more misogynistic), concluding:

All the marvellous acts of human intelligence, the discoveries in physical science, which have raised man from a savage to a civilised being; the jurisprudence, political, civil, military and religious institutions which maintain the social structure are all produced and elaborated by men. In the domain of pure intellect it is doubtful if women have contributed one profound original idea of the slightest permanent value to the world.²⁷

The speaker recognizes that the justification for the subjugation of women, which he stresses is the "normal order" is embedded in social culture but simply considers this to be further confirmation of women's natural inferiority.

²⁵ Broca, "Anthropology" Anthropological Review, Jan. 1868. J. McGriggor Allan, Esq., "On the Real Differences in the Minds of Men and Women" Anthropological Review 7, June 15th 1869. The use of the term 'races' reflects the belief that black and white races were at different stages of evolutionary development, with the European male claiming to be most highly-evolved. That Linton probably accepted this theory is shown in Under Which Lord? II. p. 104. See pp. 191-192.

²⁶ J. McGriggor Allan, p. cxcvi. (my emphasis)

²⁷ Ibid. p. ccx, cxcix. Despite the paper's supposed focus on the minds of women its "proofs" contain a much greater emphasis on female physiology.

[A]mong peoples progressing in civilisation men are in advance of women; among those retrograding the contrary is the case. As in morals, woman is the conservator of old customs, usages, traditions, legends and religions; so in the material world, she preserves primitive forms which slowly yield to the influences of civilisation.²⁸

McGriggor Allan's article only served to reinforce widely held assumptions about women's position in society. Winwood Reade, a keen scholar of African, Asian and European cultures, also acknowledged that restraints on women's lives were culturally located, "women from their earliest childhood are subjected by the selfishness of man to severe but salutary laws", and he too sees this as confirmation of social advance. (It is interesting to note that even while Reade concedes that women as individuals are subject to male restraint it is man collectively, not men individually who are the source of that restraint, thereby denying individual accountability). Reade however holds the view that women, rather than preserving a "primitive form" by acquiescing in domestic confinement (which he recognises as tangible evidence of male self-interest) without protest, prove themselves superior to men. Further, he suggests that women are the more fortunate because through many decades of male protection over female purity "chastity [has become] the rule of female life" and virtue, "assisted by long established laws and customs has become a moral law", whereas men, whose minds have been "gradually elevated and refined through the culture of the intellect", have not had the advantage of such extended guardianship. Therefore, although "the life of women is a battle-field; virtue is their courage, and peace of mind is their reward...it is not women who are to be pitied: it is they who alone are free; for by that discipline they are preserved from the tyranny of vice".²⁹ It was men, Reade argued, exposed to the corruption of the world and the depravity of public life, and bound by the ever-present hazard of the temptations of immorality, who deserved the understanding and sympathy of society.

Nevertheless, whether inferior or superior, inherently pure or innately corrupt, the final corollary remained that women's condition, like women's voices should be firmly

²⁸ Ibid. p. cciv.

²⁹ Winwood Reade, *The Martyrdom of Man* (1872) Trubner, London. 1875. pp. 456-457. Winwood Reade (1838-1875) Scottish explorer, historian and secularist philosopher. Reade's now largely forgotten work, an account of the suffering caused through the ages by fanaticism and superstition was an influence on individuals as diverse as H G Wells, Winston Churchill and Arthur Conan Doyle (who made it Sherlock Holmes' favourite book).

contained. Anthropological research offered a validation of the hegemonic concept that the preservation of moral values within family and society, the upholding of church teaching and religious observance were all encompassed within the woman's sphere and formed part of a woman's duties. Therefore when religion and science were perceived to be in conflict a woman's proper place was with the church, and, as Margaret Alic has indicated, for a woman to place her allegiance in the scientific camp was to risk challenging the limits of respectability. As already established Linton, like many of her contemporaries, was an advocate of the view that the majority of women were not sufficiently intellectually or morally advanced to reject the "primitive forms" and adopt the more manly agnosticism to which she herself adhered. The views expressed by the Anthropological Society in this regard echoed Linton's own; nevertheless she still craved access to the scientific world from which her gender "naturally" disqualified her.

The doors of science were not entirely closed to female access, although their presence was firmly regulated. Women formed a large part of the audience for public lectures on science and the majority of local natural history societies, zoological and botanical gardens and museums relied on female support. Indeed, these and similar organisations were among the few public events which husbands and wives could attend together in perfect respectability. These organisations were however largely concerned with natural history and appealed to the amateur scientist and collector, among whom women had always had a place. However, the most respected and philosophical scientific societies vigorously defended themselves against female influence. Not all excluded women in all circumstances, although even those that did admit women to their lectures considered that the only stimulus that women's presence provided was a purely aesthetic one.³⁰ The Royal Institution allowed women to attend their lectures, in 1859 the Royal Geographical Society had voted to admit 'Ladies' to their meetings and in 1860, under the presidency of Linton's friend John Crawfurd, the Ethnological Society did likewise.³¹ Eliza Linton was an eager presence at many of these gatherings, where she was energized by the discussions and excited by the distinguished company. In Kirkland she is effusive in describing her joy in attending these meetings.

³⁰ See Lynn Barber, Ch. 9.

³¹ John Crawfurd (1783-1868) Orientalist, scholar and diplomat.

Those Friday Evening Lectures at the Royal Institution, when Tyndall experimented or Huxley demonstrated....what evenings in the Court of Paradise those were! How I pitied the poor wretches who did not come to them! Contrast a Queen's Ball and a Friday evening Lecture – the nothingness of one and the glorious communion of the other! I do not think there was one in the whole audience who drank in the wine of scientific thought with more avidity than I. Did my own ignorance make that wine but froth? Perhaps. All the same, it strengthened, warmed, exhilarated and almost intoxicated me.

CK III. pp. 83-84

Linton's use of religious terminology makes explicit the intensity of her passion toward science, indicative of the depth of her conviction that it was the role of science to drive out and replace religion in national life. Clearly Linton's attendance at these lectures was for her a form of worship, the ceremonies as invested with pious devotion as any church service, in which she was able to receive the sacrament of scientific enlightenment with almost as much ecstatic fervour as Lascelles' overawed congregation in Under Which Lord received the host. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that Kirkland is written with a male persona so that while Linton's religious terminology may have given an indication as to the actual gender of its author the masculine protagonist can legitimately promote science in all its incarnations without overstepping the bounds of modesty.

Just as the men of the church sought to control and subdue their female worshippers, allowing women access to their meetings did not mean that the men of science, any more than their religious counterparts, had shifted their position on the inherent inferiority of women. It continued to be axiomatic that women were physiologically, emotionally and intellectually incapable of contributing to scientific debate. Moreover, the very presence of women in the scientific lecture room was held to stifle discussion. Propriety would not permit full and frank dialogue on any subject likely to offend womanly modesty. In an article for the Quarterly Review Richard Owen agonised over the respectability of the inclusion of the "reproductive economy and apparatus of a bee", while Huxley regretted the anticipated attendance of women at his lecture on the common origin of men and apes, complaining in terms that were much more significant than he surely intended, that he would be forced "to emasculate [his] discourse" because

of the presence of women in his audience.³² Thus he implies that the presence of women in science not only stifles the free and frank debate natural to masculine society but that the presence of women debilitates both the male body and the male intellect.

The Anthropological Society, founded in 1863 by the anti-Christian, anti-liberal James Hunt, provided a platform from which he and his supporters could voice the virulently racist and extreme social theories that were less acceptable in the more liberal minded Ethnological Society. Formed partly as a response to the Ethnological opening its doors to women, the Anthropological Society unambiguously forbade them from admission into its all-male bastion. The minutes of its council meeting for August 5th 1863 record that one of the first motions adopted by the society was that while ladies were free to become "financial members" they "shall on no occasion whatever be allowed to attend any of the meetings".³³ The Anthropological was soon attracting double the membership of the Ethnological and Richards considers its greater popularity to be one of the factors that informed Huxley's campaign, when he succeeded Crawford as President of the Ethnological (1868) to bar women from its lectures, although she also adds the sardonic suggestion that the provocative and often salacious discussions which took place at the Anthropological, without the emasculating influence of women, may also have had an impact on its levels of membership.³⁴ While the reactionary Hunt and the (comparatively) more liberal Huxley may have had their ideological differences, they were both agreed that the very presence of women in the lecture hall would inexorably hinder the progress of science, and women's ingress into the lecture halls of the Ethnological Society was short-lived. In reality the Anthropological and Ethnological Societies were not as different as might be supposed, many members subscribed to both societies whose theories, collective cultural assumptions and conclusions remained largely comparable.

It has been argued that the chief difference between the two societies was in their level of humanitarianism, the Ethnological being the more sympathetic of the two societies to

³² Barber, p. 133. T.H. Huxley to E.P. Wright, March 8 1862. Richards, p. 259.

³³ "Council Minutes of the Anthropological Society of London" Aug.5, 1863, Richards, p. 263. As Richards pithily notes, Hunt's antipathy toward women did not extend as far as their purses, women's money was welcome even when their persons were not.

³⁴ Richards, p.164.

the human condition.³⁵ It is a matter of speculation with which camp Linton would have aligned herself (the evidence suggests that the Ethnological would have been favourite, certainly while John Crawfurd was President), that she was excluded from both was the cause of much frustration. The ambiguities inherent in Linton's own position were highlighted in a letter to Huxley, written in response to his move to bar women from the Ethnological Society's lectures. In it she makes an uncharacteristic plea, for herself and for all women, that they should be better educated and allowed greater opportunities in order to best equip themselves for the "battle of life". Employing a strategy that she was later to utilise in "A Protest and a Plea", Linton stressed her "lesser" right to speak on the subject while simultaneously claiming a personal and individual prerogative to do so, before endorsing her position as spokesperson by calling attention to her symbolic positioning as the "representative" of an underrepresented faction.

Never before reproduced in its entirety, this document serves as compelling evidence of the dilemma and the frustrations which many women faced, none more so than Linton herself. As a leading public advocate of separate spheres and an outspoken critic of the women's rights movement, ostensibly she was not in a position to object to women's exclusion from the masculine world of science, particularly on the grounds that it hindered women's education. Nevertheless, the prospect of not being allowed to continue to attend the Society's lectures caused her much distress, distress that is clearly apparent as she attempts to maintain the womanly proprieties and simultaneously make a plea for female inclusion. Her letter was shrewdly designed to flatter Huxley's private and professional persona in as many ways as possible and includes the authentically Darwinian argument that access to scientific knowledge would make women fitter members of society, thus making them more able to take part in the "hand to hand struggle for existence".³⁶

³⁵ Gay Weber, "Science and Society in Nineteenth Century Anthropology" *History of Science*, Vol. 12, 1974. p. 270.

³⁶ Linton to Thomas Huxley, November 11 1868. Original in the Huxley Papers (item 21. 223-6) reproduced by permission of the Archives of Imperial College, London. For a facsimile of the original letter, see appendix III. I have retained Linton's spelling and sometimes idiosyncratic punctuation and grammar, the regrettable omissions are the result of my being defeated by Linton's always difficult to read, and occasionally indecipherable handwriting.

Dear Sir

I trust you will not think me presumptuous in addressing you. I wd. have spoken to you last night but I was afraid you wd. think me forward; & besides I had no opportunity without forwardness – I want to urge the claims of we women to be still admitted to the meetings of the Ethnological Society. I grant that in the interests of science (paramount of every other consideration) there may be at times necessary discussion on special subjects wh. wd. render our presence hindering or indelicate. But these occasions are rare; & as you know the papers beforehand we can always be got rid of by an intimation at the close of the previous lecture, by a notice left with the porter, by private information from our friends. I grant too that there are certain port and wine men to whom the presence of women is annoying. I know because they are shy & reverential & look on us as drawing room divinities, not to be mixed up in anything whatsoever of outside life – men to whom knowledge in a woman is unfeminine, & scientific knowledge especially so – to others because they are cynical and contemptuous & think us mere drawing room dummies incapable of education and unworthy of serious association. Grant these two classes, as themselves unworthy of attention – but what are these facts of woman's special condition? We are thrown into an active hand to hand struggle for existence all the same as men – we of the middle-classes have to earn our own bread – with very badly trained hands or brains it must be sorrowfully confessed! We are not all divinities safely buried in a sufficing stupour; not all dummies incapable of anything beyond duty or dissipation. The battle of life is a very serious matter to some of us, and we are frequently hindered and heavily weighted.

Let me speak of myself, not from egotism but as a representative woman of the bread-winning class. Without any early education whatsoever, save being taught to read & write & this is not an exaggerated but a literal statement – I have fought my own way and made my own bread by literature for 23 years. I have never owned a Patron; & I have never been backed up by a friendly clique – but honestly, independently & straightly, as you your-self sir might have done. I have worked & earned, always under disadvantages.

I have been & am a newspaper writer to some extent, but my area is limited & my powers are unequal to the best kind of work owing to the want of those advantages & opportunities as men have. You meet in clubs & societies, discuss, strike out new thoughts, hear a multiplicity of views, then work on that as a mind not self evolved. We women sit at home and spin from the one poor brain unaided. Hence the comparative poverty of women's work. It is always on one single line – her own – instead of being considered as gaining by the content of other minds & perhaps superior knowledge.

When we are admitted into societies then we are admitted into something that infinitely enriches & enlarges our horizon. We may not bring away a large collection of definite facts but we hear the arguments of clever men, we listen to the various modes of thoughts & to the methods of discussions. We come into the presence of the living thought – the living word – instead of being only [...] to the deader reading – But I would not argue for the advantages to be had by attending scientific meetings – if then are [...] [...] all for you, so for us. You know how few opportunities we women have for getting any serious or valuable

talk with men. We meet you in 'Society' – with crowds of friends about and in an atmosphere of finery and artificiality – Suppose I, or any woman – let her be as fascinating as possible – were to bombard you with scientific talk – wd. you not rather go off to the stupidest little girl who had not a thought above her pretty frock, than begin a discussion on the Origin of Species, on the birthplace of the [...] - which reptiles and fish [...] with each other? - And wd. you not think it better for yr. lady, that she wd. have been able to have attended yr. lectures or any other scientific man's, and so have learned instead of being induced to worry you "misterously". If then we are not to speak of grave or scientific things in "Society", & are shut out from almost all scientific "societies"; how are we to learn? By books? But books are not always procurable & books are lengthy to read, & lectures give the matter in a concentrated and striking form. One remembers more from a lecture than from a book, when one has passed the real student age. The paid afternoon lecturer? – you will say. They are [...]. To a woman like myself utterly unattainable. I cannot afford the working time and I cannot afford the money – This Royal Institution is a favour very hard to obtain. I have been there only thrice in my life. – Such meetings of the Ethnological, simple, without finery or parade are real bread and meat to my mind. I do not mean I make money by them but they feed me. They are relaxations after a hard days work, & they are not dissipations. They bring us in contact with men like yourself, & back to home [cleverer?], enriched, ennobled from that contact. The most valuable friendship I ever made I made at the Ethno. (dear old Mr Crawford, whom I had known as a child, & then renewed our old acquaintance) & I have learnt much from the discussions.

I ask you then to reconsider the question of our expulsion if you have already determined on it; and to let my fervent prayer influence you if you are yet undecided.

I have written hurriedly, not caring to write so lengthily & as heartily & I have jumbled all my reasons – like a woman!

But the chief line of argument with me is – that we women have to carve our bread all the same as you – that we are brain workers all the same (with what a difference!) as you men - & that it is not fair to exclude us from the means of knowledge & of active thought, of extended views – such as we get from attending learned discussions – on the simple plea of our womanhood.

I pray you with all my strength to keep us as attendants at the Ethnological meetings, & when you are going to discuss hazardous papers give us warning, & we will stay away. Else let us be free still to attend. -

I do not ask for an answer to this, & I apologise very sincerely for the length of my petition - for it is a petition not a letter - To me personally this meeting learned men in these societies is of priceless value. It is the only way in which I can see them, not having a [uncle?] or a husband or any personal means of making their acquaintance.

Yours respectfully

E. Lynn Linton.

This document, never intended for public consumption, with its heartfelt exclamations of “how are we to learn?” and “it is not fair to exclude us...on the simple plea of our womanhood” seems at times more fitted to the advocates of women’s rights than to a writer whose literary legacy is that of diehard anti-feminism. The language she chooses with its inclusive pronouns “us”, “we” and “our” clearly suggests that she is aligning herself with a sisterhood. Linton was dismayed by the thought of exclusion from these scientific “courts of paradise”, and in putting herself forward as a “representative woman of the bread-winning class” she was seemingly adopting the role of spokeswoman for an increasingly large and diverse group struggling to establish careers for themselves against the “heavily weighted” inequalities of a patriarchal culture.

However, in a Saturday Review piece written not long after her letter to Huxley, Linton applauds the individual woman who “stands alone” and quietly achieves her ambitions without the “pamphleteering, lecturing or petitioning” that the “shrieking sisterhood” of Advanced Women employ. Citing the examples of Mary Somerville, Harriet Martineau, Florence Nightingale and Rosa Bonheur as independent women who achieved their aims “quietly and with dignity” and crucially, without favour, Linton is clearly thinking of herself, as she concludes that women should “simply take without leave asked or given, and work out their own social salvation by the irrepressible force of concentrated will and in the silence of conscious strength”.³⁷

In spite of representing herself to Huxley as a mediator for her sex Linton’s primary concern was a personal one: “we are not all” plainly translates into “I am not”, and she continued to condemn those who publicly strove for what she privately desired. As a cultural commentator she plainly felt that her work would have been immeasurably enhanced by first hand access to contemporary scientific debate, whereas “hindered” by her sex she was debarred even as witness let alone active participant. Frustrated by the constraints of society that maintained strict notions of female vulnerability and which colluded in keeping women ignorant, Linton nevertheless persistently endeavoured to uphold the integrity of that same system whilst simultaneously attempting to undermine its influence on her own life. Seemingly agreeing that women’s writing was of lesser

³⁷ Linton, “The Shrieking Sisterhood” Saturday Review, March 12 1870 in Social Essays II. p. 66, 69, 71.

quality than that of her male associates (and reinforcing this assertion by apologising for the ‘womanly’ disorder of her appeal) Linton invokes an argument frequently extended by the advocates of women’s rights, that without equal access to educational and intellectual resources then women will always continue to be “hindered” in life.

An article in The Queen (1869) also draws attention to the exclusion of women from the scientific societies. This item, which in turn refers to an article published that month in the Contemporary Review, records that Miss Becker, “whose name has hitherto been chiefly associated with her efforts after obtaining the franchise for women...puts before us the claims of women to a scientific training”. Miss Becker, who had been in correspondence with various secretaries of scientific societies concerning the question of whether women were, “encouraged or discouraged by these institutions”, writes, “it is no light mortification to a woman who is desirous of prosecuting a study, to find that the doors of the high places of science are rigorously closed against her”. Miss Becker’s petition is founded not on a personal appeal but on a matter of principle, an appeal for equal rights with men, and it is doubtful that she would have acquiesced with The Queen’s bland conclusion that:

No Scientific Societies open their doors to women as Fellows, though a few admit them to their meetings. It is to be much regretted, for the sake of women who love science, that this should be so. But in time the barriers now existing may be broken down, and it may be that the question of sex will not always exclude women from opportunities for scientific study and honour.³⁸

That the situation was to be “regretted”, and its repeated indefinite, “may be” that at an unspecified point in the future the situation might change, although they would not have agreed on the reasons why women should have access to the scientific societies, would have satisfied neither Linton or Miss Becker. Where Miss Becker claims a woman’s right to equal access, Linton upholds men’s right to exclude them, “we can always be got rid of”, and Linton’s advocacy of her own claim for entry to the means of furthering

³⁸ “Women and Science” The Queen, April 10 1869. p. 219. Miss Becker is presumably Lydia Becker, editor of the Women’s Suffrage Journal and a central figure in the campaign for women’s rights. Unfortunately this article came to my attention too late for more thorough investigation. It is an area with much potential for future research.

her own scientific education did not, in all likelihood extend to encompass that of other members of her sex.

Despite frequent lamentations regarding the paucity of her own schooling, Linton held very firm views on the question of women's education. She was a forceful opponent of higher education for women and her outspoken criticism of the Girton Girl, particularly in her novel The One too Many (1894) enraged many of her contemporaries, friends and foe alike. Layard admitted that Linton "vigorously...and somewhat recklessly made war on Girton and all its works", although he attempts to mitigate her condemnation of the novel's female graduates by reasoning that it was Linton's "obsession with the feminine character" that lay at the heart of her criticism rather than the denunciation of the institutes and recipients of women's higher education themselves.³⁹ However, given that Linton's girl graduates drink, smoke, swear, take stimulants, either scorn men or advocate free love and "know more of the darker secrets of human life than is fitting" it is not hard to see why The One too Many proved a controversial text, not least among female university graduates and their families.⁴⁰ Beatrice Harraden, Linton's "little B.A." was dismayed by her mentor's "most absurd and unseemly representations" of the modern young woman and was tempted to join the public debate then raging on the correspondence pages of The Lady's Pictorial, where "many indignant remonstrances were appearing", although in deference to their friendship she contented herself with sending a private objection.⁴¹ Protesting, "I don't ever remember having been so hurt. We are all smarting, we young women of the day, of whom you think so badly", Harraden felt the issue caused a "certain coolness" to spring up between them, though happily their friendship was able to transcend even that fundamental difference.⁴²

In a remembrance written soon after Linton's death Harraden notes that she had always been of the opinion that Linton "cared more for a liberal education for women than she herself realised...but she had so saturated herself with her stereo-typed opposition to the higher education of women and their ways, that her mind could not travel freely on that

³⁹ Layard, p. 289.

⁴⁰ Linton to the Editor of The Lady's Pictorial, in Layard, p. 292. n.d. The Lady's Pictorial published The One too Many in serial form (1893) before its issue in 3 volumes by Chatto & Windus in 1894.

⁴¹ Beatrice Harraden in Layard, p. 301.

⁴² Beatrice Harraden to Linton, in Layard, pp. 301-2. n.d. (c. 1893).

trail".⁴³ Certainly there is evidence in Linton's letter to Huxley (and in later correspondence with Herbert Spencer) to suggest that Harraden may have been correct in her supposition. Moreover, in Kirkland Linton laments the great disservice, both individually and to society, which all her siblings' lack of a proper education had brought about.

There never was a family with so much power left to run so cruelly to waste for want of timely cultivation as was ours! It is no vanity to say that we were an exceptionally fine set all through, and that, had we been properly trained, each of us would have made our mark. There was not a dunce among us, nor a physical failure. ... I have often lamented the waste of good material in our family, and the loss to the world that it has been. When I see the elaborate education given to boys *and girls* with brain-power of the most ordinary calibre, and note what careful training has made of them, and then remember the large amount of mental and physical vitality among ourselves, and what ordinary care might have made of us, I confess I feel heartsick...it has been a real loss.

CK I. pp. 78-79 (my emphasis)

Linton's underlying suggestion here seems to be, not that boys *or girls* receive an appropriate education (whatever that might be) but that irrespective of gender they should receive an education commensurate with their intellectual capacity. It seems more than likely that at the root of Linton's antipathy toward educated women was a deep-seated jealousy that girls whom she identified as undeserving of higher education should have access to that which she was denied.

However, even though she had firmly held notions of the supposed character of the modern young women (a stereo-type which Linton had in no small part helped to create) she was, at least as far as certain areas of science were concerned, prepared to publicly amend her opinion. In 1890, on one of her regular sojourns to her home town of Keswick, Linton was dismayed to find that she was to share her hotel with a party of Cambridge geology students, amongst whom were a number of women. Her "anticipated annoyance" was however mitigated to find that rather than the "abnormal specimens of humanity" that she expected, the students were in fact quite respectable and that the party included a woman who immediately created a most favourable impression. Mary Hughes, wife and colleague of Professor Thomas Hughes, represented

⁴³ Beatrice Harraden, "Mrs. Lynn Linton" Bookman Vol. 8 Sept. 1898. p. 17.

a positive role model for all would be female scientists and Linton declared that it was “doubly delightful” to meet a “charming woman” who was also an accomplished scientist and an exemplary wife. Utilising the same arguments as those that praised the combination of intellect and femininity in learned women of previous generations Linton applauded Mary Hughes for her ability to “tell all about a fossil with a ponderous name, yet know how to dress with perfection”. Scientific knowledge among women, Linton is suggesting, need not lead to deviancy or the creation of androgynous freaks. Learned women may “need such a beautiful example as our ‘Professoress’” but at least where geology was concerned, she assured the readers of The Queen, intellectual attainment could be achieved without compromising moral character.⁴⁴ Scientists’ wives, their “invisible assistants”, were often, like Mary Hughes accomplished scholars in their own right, or, like Caroline Owen, married to the zoologist Richard Owen, and Henrietta Huxley, wife of Thomas, offered invaluable support to their scientific partners. Though this was not invariably the case, when Charles Darwin voiced his concern that his wife would find a forthcoming scientific lecture “wearisome” she was heard to reply “no more than all the rest”.⁴⁵

IV. The Challenge of Science to Religious Belief: Eliza Lynn Linton as a Reflection of the Victorian Psyche.

If evolutionary theory was exploited as grounds for argument that there was no place for women in the new scientific echelons it was also identified as leaving no place for God in the new scientific world, giving rise to a variety of reactions from despair to exultation. Not only Darwin’s Origin but also Charles Lyell’s Principles of Geology (1830-33) and Robert Chambers’ Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation (1844) were to have a profound influence on Victorian religious and scientific thought. It has been argued before the advent of these major documents, nature, the “natural order” of the world had been envisioned as “the manifestation of a good and beneficent

⁴⁴ Linton, “A Pleasure Party,” The Queen, Aug. 2, 1890. Geology as a natural science had always been considered a suitable area of scientific interest for women and fossil collecting was a respectable female hobby.

⁴⁵ Londa Schiebinger, “Invisible Assistants” in The Mind has no Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science, Harvard University Press, Mass. 1991. pp. 99-101. Lynn Barber, p. 138.

God....the order and design of a creative intelligence” but that after their publication, “nature became a battleground in which individuals and species fought for their lives and every acre of land was the scene of untold violence and suffering” as exemplified by Tennyson’s vision of “nature, red in tooth and claw”.⁴⁶

Still, it did not need the evolutionist trinity of Lyell, Chambers and Darwin to reach fruition before the depth of distress that their theories would intensify began to manifest itself in print. This disquiet is perhaps most famously exemplified in Tennyson’s In Memoriam, in which the poet gives voice to his questioning of the whole nature of the human condition that the death of his friend had instigated. While there is a wealth of distinction between Linton and Tennyson there are perhaps more points of connection than might at first be recognised. Both reflect the dominant Victorian social class and the intellectual and moral values of their time; both offer an authentic response to the anxieties engendered by the position of science and religion in national life; both were denounced by late nineteenth and early twentieth century critics as emblematic of what came to be seen, in their derogatory sense and in varying degrees, as the typically Victorian standards of banal sentimentality, jingoism and hypocrisy.⁴⁷ However, while both can be seen to be characteristic of many of the shifting aspects of English Victorianism, their greatest difference lies in their reputation. Later criticism apart, Tennyson’s recognition as Laureate, literally and figuratively, of the Victorian age reflects his canonical status as representative of the era and a reflector of its cultural perceptions, a recognition that Linton has hitherto not been awarded. Nevertheless they shared and gave voice to many of the same anxieties.

⁴⁶ Houghton, p. 68. Lyell’s text emphasised gradualism, arguing that geographical evidence suggested a pre-history of many millions of years. Other theorists, notably Jeane Baptiste de Lamarck (1744-1829), argued for a system in which organisms adapt to their conditions, and pass on those changes, over very few generations. The Lamarckian theory offered the notion of a more efficient, and beneficent system that was contradicted by Darwin’s model of an arbitrary, capricious and much more extended process. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, In Memoriam (1850) I. vi.

⁴⁷ A.C. Bradley, “The Reaction Against Tennyson” (originally a 1914 lecture) in Robert W. Hill Tennyson’s Poetry, Norton, New York. 1971 discusses the unfashionableness of Tennyson’s work and philosophy as a natural development, “every generation naturally asks for novelty...the ideas and the literature of times immediately preceding its own are apt to be the least interesting of all...and may even be felt...to be a prison from which it is necessary to escape”. p. 585. The desirability of escaping from the mores of the immediate past is exemplified in Lytton Strachey’s ironic debunking of the preceding generation in Eminent Victorians (1918).

First published in 1850 In Memoriam has been called “one of the cardinal documents of the mid Victorian mind”.⁴⁸ The influence of Lyell and Chambers on the writing of In Memoriam is well documented and indicates that sections 55 and 56, the most explicitly evolutionary sections, were completed prior to the publication of Vestiges in 1844.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, as Tennyson concludes his elegy it is possible to draw a direct connection between Vestiges and In Memoriam in that each posits the possibility that in the advance of evolution, mankind has yet to reach the final phase. Chambers’ speculation “Is our race but the initial of the grand crowning type?” is answered in the epilogue of Tennyson’s eulogy to the dead Hallam in which he considers his friend,

...a closer link
Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth’s, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book;⁵⁰

Tennyson confronted the challenge that evolutionary theory offered to the foundations of belief and emerged from the turmoil of In Memoriam with his faith apparently intact, something from which many Victorians, wracked with similar anxieties, were able to draw solace and reassurance. Linton experienced similar emotional and intellectual tumult but drew very different conclusions. Her vision of the “crowning race” was one in which religious belief had explicitly been rejected, discarded in the face of the evidence of lucid, cogent, and above all provable, scientific truths. Unlike Tennyson, Linton found in science, particularly evolutionary theory, not a source of disquiet or distress but a comfort and a reassurance.

While there is no direct reference that points to Linton’s reading of In Memoriam it is unthinkable that she was not as familiar with Tennyson’s work as any other scholarly

⁴⁸ G. M Young, Victorian England: Portrait of an Age (1936) Oxford University Press, London. 1961. p. 75. Young’s utilisation of the literature of the immediate past indicates that historians at least are not as swift to escape from the confinement of the recent past as biographers or literary critics.

⁴⁹ Georg Roppen, “The Crowning Race: Tennyson and the Theory of Evolution” discusses his own, and other research that identifies an engagement with evolutionary theory in much of Tennyson’s poetry, including In Memoriam, Robert W. Hill (ed.) pp. 661-681.

⁵⁰ Robert Chambers, Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation (p.276) in Houghton, p. 36. Tennyson, In Memoriam, Epilogue, lines 127-132.

Victorian. Indeed, its admission into the Victorian psyche, as intimated by Young is demonstrated in Linton's Rebel of the Family (1880) in which the poem's title is used as a form of shorthand to describe any exposition of loss and remembrance.

If she did worse than she had done already, she should be cut off without reprieve, and buried out of sight without even an *In Memoriam* to mark that she had once lived in their affections.

Rebel p. 343

Similarly, her anti-new woman In Haste and at Leisure (1894) has a model of English manhood (his character reflected in his name, Frank) condemn its "unsexed brazen hussies" with a reference to "that well worn quotation from 'The Princess,' which is only new to the young". The passage that was so well known as to not require repeating, emphasising the ideology of separate spheres is presumably:

Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
Man for the sword and for the needle she:
Man with the head and woman with the heart:
Man to command and woman to obey;
All else confusion.⁵¹

Science also draws a link between Tennyson and Linton in their mutual admiration for James Spedding whom the poet called "the wisest man I know" and whom Linton described, in an echo of Tennyson's representation of Hallam, as one who "touched the crown of the ideal student".⁵²

James Thompson ('B.V.') now like Linton an essentially overlooked Victorian, offers an interpretation of the implications of evolutionary theory in which Darwinism displaces belief, but without the optimistic outcome to which Linton was to look forward. Although written two decades later than Origin, Thompson's extended, strange

⁵¹ In Haste and at Leisure, pp. 192-193. Tennyson, "The Princess," V. 427.

⁵² Layard, p. 152. James Spedding (1808-1881) philosopher, editor and essayist. That Linton was a keen student of poetry is demonstrated in an interview she gave for Chats with Pioneers of Modern Thought (1898) Included in these interviews is a catalogue of the most prominent books in the various subjects' libraries. Included in Linton's, alongside a compendious collection of scientific, philosophic and political works were shelved the "accustomed parade" of poets. Authors whose works appeared repeatedly on the bookshelves of all Chats interviewees include J. S. Mill, Darwin, Lyell, Chambers, George Eliot, Huxley and Carlyle. On essayist and author Constance Plumtre's shelves, was "a little work which Rationalists should not allow to drop into oblivion - Mrs. Lynn Linton's Joshua Davidson". F. J. Gould, p. 20.

and melancholy poem City of Dreadful Night (1880) offers a powerful sense of the insecurity to which changes in scientific thought were giving rise, one which envisioned evolutionary science as predicting the demise of mankind.

Nothing is of us but the mouldering flesh,
Whose elements dissolve and merge afresh
In earth, air, water, plants, and other men.

We finish thus; and all our wretched race
Shall finish with its cycle, and give place
To other beings, and their own time-doom:

Infinite aeons ere our kind began; Infinite aeons after the last man
Has joined the mammoth in earth's tomb and womb.⁵³

Much more well-known and less overtly pessimistic than Thompson, Thomas Hardy also struggled unsuccessfully to reconcile human suffering and the unfairness of the world with the emotional desire for optimistic belief, the affectionate nostalgia that Hardy had for rural life, combining in his novels with the inexorable and inevitable cruelty of natural determinism. Though by no means all Darwinists believed that evolutionary theory meant the inevitable demise of mankind the subject was one which was vigorously debated and was to have a profound effect on previously held theological assumptions, leading inevitably to the questioning of the clergy's authoritarian position in society; a theme, which we have seen, that was to emerge repeatedly throughout Linton's work. Linton did not accept the pessimistic implications of evolution and the negative repercussions that its application could be seen to connote, as demonstrated by James Thompson. For Linton all aspects of scientific advance, practical and philosophical, were evidence of the potential elevation of mankind, not of its demise, a confidence that provided impetus to her championing of the scientific cause.

In Christopher Kirkland Linton documents what could be termed her own early discovery of science and her admiration for, and allegiance with, the men who initiated,

⁵³ James Thomson (B.V.) The City of Dreadful Night (1880) Edwin Morgan (ed.) Canongate Press, Edinburgh. 1993. Sec. XIV. 52 – 60. pp. 56-57. Morgan records that Thomson has been given the dubious accolade of "the laureate of pessimism". p. 9.

revised and advanced scientific theory. It has already been demonstrated that Linton supposed religious faith appropriate to women because of cultural assumptions of female inferiority - women's lack of self-control and susceptibility to immoral influence, her "timid plasticity" and illogical emotionalism all made acquiescence to a higher authority natural and necessary. Thus in Linton's terms the promotion of science over religion was to conflate her own definition of sanctioned female positioning. Her adoption of a male persona in Kirkland therefore enables her to discuss the centrality of science in shaping her personal philosophy and allows her to be more forthright than would be usual without transcending established gender boundaries. In Kirkland Linton makes clear that, although her interest in scientific study and its philosophical implications preceded Darwin the publication of Origin of Species was for her a seminal moment.

Kirkland was published twenty-five years after Origin and throughout that period Linton had witnessed, "the enormous span [that] science and free thought have thrown across the abyss of ignorance and superstition". Like Tennyson, and her freethinking associates, Linton identified Lyell and Chambers, together with Darwin, as theorists who were to have a profound bearing on the formulation of her own personal beliefs. Darwin was the "greatest man of all", "the true epoch-maker and torch-bearer of the century". Lyell was "an immense influence" and Robert Chambers, although "in a sense pre-scientific" was nevertheless a "brave pioneer". Chambers' Vestiges was a "priceless treasure", which would "take rank for ever as one of the advanced guard in the forces of knowledge as they stand arrayed against those of ignorance".⁵⁴ In fact Vestiges was a book that "everyone read", including Queen Victoria, Florence Nightingale, Gladstone, Abraham Lincoln, Fanny Kemble, George Eliot and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, not all of course with the same result.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Kirkland III. p, 79, 76. Linton's assertion that Chambers' was "the first idea of cosmic continuity, and the consequent destruction of the bit by bit creation of Genesis" (CK I. p. 236) is incorrect as it was not the first of its kind. In fact Linton was well aware that his 1844 text was preceded by a number of others, including Lyell.

⁵⁵ Robert Chambers, Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation (1844) James Secord (ed.) Chicago University Press, Chicago. 1994. p. 468 in A. N. Wilson, The Victorians, p. 95. Even though its science is often wildly inaccurate Vestiges was of timely significance and is credited in a number of Victorian biographies, and social histories, as being at least partly responsible for a fundamental shift in patterns of religious belief. In "The Unities of Nature" Linton describes it as "holding one end of the truth". p. 55.

She also writes admiringly of the early scientists who “made the running, if they did not reach the goal” including John Crawfurd, to whom “the revolutionizers” owe grateful thanks as they “sit much higher, and know so much the more” for the “use of his shoulders”. He was one of the first to “speak the new language” and who saw “the shape of things to come” Others with whom Linton was closely acquainted included the President of the Royal Society, physicist William Spottiswoode, the mathematician and metaphysician W. K. Clifford and the naturalist Francis Balfour. It was Linton’s conviction that these men, and others of their kind, were in the vanguard of human progress and that it was science, not religion, which held the key to mankind’s redemption. They were the “advanced guard in the forces of knowledge as they stand arrayed against those of ignorance” and Linton in her own way, and not for the first time, positioned herself in that front line.⁵⁶

Owen Chadwick, a distinguished chronicler of ecclesiastical history, states that while “everyone agreed that science unsettled”, many educated men had already ceased to believe in the literal truth of much of the bible without compromising belief. Noah and the flood, Jonah and the whale and many other bible stories had long been “put into the category of legends” but for the majority their visible faith had remained secure.⁵⁷ Pre-dating Darwin, Geraldine Jewsbury’s The Half Sisters (1848) indicates that the subject was already familiar as she has Mr Bryant scathingly refer to the English provincial gentleman as arriving at the same theological conclusions as their fellows, as if they were a “new revelation”; although Bryant also points to the difficulties faced by his friend, the anonymous geologist C____, of negotiating a respectable path between science and faith.

[I]f C____ do not pick his way through the Mosaic theory of creation, and keep his chin cleverly above the waters of Noah’s deluge, he will be held up as a heathen man, and be attacked for his insidious principles.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Kirkland III, pp. 71, 75, 76 - 85. Linton corresponded with Lyell and Huxley and was well acquainted with John Crawfurd and his family. In her later years she and Herbert Spencer became friends.

⁵⁷ Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church: Part II. A. & C. Black, London. 1970. p. 3.

⁵⁸ Geraldine Jewsbury The Half Sisters (1848) Joanne Wilkes (ed.) Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1994. p. 55.

Chadwick goes on to argue that it was the manifestation of the science versus religion debate in the pages of the public press that was to have the most profound effect on patterns of Christian belief. He allows that in the “shadowy land” of intellectual history it is not possible to accurately determine the exact extent to which philosophical beliefs or perspectives on the external world were altered by “articulated opinion”.

Nevertheless he is confident that:

Quiet men in pews knew nothing of these matters and were untroubled until they met the question in a newspaper, a pamphlet, an agitator or a friend. This governed everything. The churches taught something that could no longer be believed, and therefore all the other teaching of the churches fell into question.⁵⁹

However, from the evidence it seems clear that while Chadwick’s assertion of the unsettling nature of science is undoubtedly correct, his claim that the “ordinary” man knew nothing of the debate might well be erroneous.

Nevertheless it is the case that by the beginning of the 1860s what might hitherto have been a subject for personal reflection and quiet discussion amongst like-minded individuals had begun, as Chadwick indicates, to figure more prominently in the public arena. Newspapers and periodicals provided a forum for the debate, a circumstance that served to both legitimate and further the dispute. A number of notable scientists, journalists and public figures entered the lists under the banner of reason with the concomitant result of such a hostile reaction amongst clergymen and church supporters that the gulf between science and theology grew ever wider as the arguments on each side became more exaggerated. The pages of the press were indeed battlegrounds where spokesmen for science and religion fought for their intellectual lives. Influential voices on the scientific side of the debate included Herbert Spencer, John Crawfurd, Charles Lyell, and most particularly Thomas Henry Huxley, “the chief expounder and champion of Darwinism”.⁶⁰ Exponents on the other included the Bishop of Oxford “Soapy Sam” Wilberforce and the anatomist and palaeontologist Richard Owen, a determined enemy of development theory. Chadwick’s “quiet men in pews” whatever credence they had given privately to the fallibility of the scriptures or the revelations of scientific

⁵⁹ Chadwick, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Richards, p. 253. Huxley was known as “Darwin’s Bulldog”.

discovery, were drawn into the debate, constrained to take a stance one side or the other.⁶¹

While Linton can by no means be seen as representing a “quiet man in a pew” (even though her pro-scientific, anti-theist stance was a masculine one) it can be recognized that her own experience, leading to her rejection of Christian dogma in favour of verifiable science was by no means unique, or even that extraordinary. Layard, who did not share Linton’s antithetical position, believes that while her stance was not in itself remarkable, the fact that she came to it at such a young age, and at such an early stage in the history of evolutionary debate, was rather more exceptional. He records that in 1838 (contemporary with the writing of In Memoriam) at the age of seventeen, the adolescent Eliza Lynn’s mind was “ripe for that change in speculative thought which was to carry her far enough away from the beliefs and presumptions of her childhood”. But, he adds, it cannot “fail to be admitted that the problems with which Eliza Lynn’s intellect found itself face to face in its exceptional precocity”, were later in the century, “commonly to be met with in the more slowly matured minds of all classes”.⁶² Layard however fails to mention that Linton’s gender made her open agnosticism, and her enthusiastic espousal of science much more unusual. In fact, as James Moore vividly notes, during the middle decades of the century there was a “notable haemorrhage of talent to the ranks of unbelief” and in her anti-religious convictions Eliza Linton was in illustrious, if largely male, company.⁶³ What makes Linton remarkable is that through the chronicling of her own response to the intellectual and psychological pressures exerted by the theories of Darwin and his predecessors she offers both an authentic insight into the heart of a great cultural anxiety and a gradation of rational and measured response against which others may be judged.

⁶¹ For example The Athenaeum July 7 1860 & July 14 1860 gave two lengthy reports of meetings of the British Assoc. for the Advancement of Science, recording what later came to be seen as the most important encounters between the proponents and opponents of evolutionary theory. These meetings were reported to attract “an immense audience,” The Victorian Mind, Kauvar & Sorenson (eds.) Cassell, London. 1969. pp. 251-258.

⁶² Layard, pp. 34-35.

⁶³ James P. Moore (ed.) Religion in Victorian Britain, Vol. III. Manchester University Press, Manchester. 1988. pp. 63-64. Always Linton’s archrival, probably the most noted female agnostic of the time was George Eliot.

Although transformations in scientific thought were in progress well before the middle of the century it was during the 1860s and 70s that society became truly animated by new and often seemingly revolutionary scientific developments. As Linton noted, the publication of Origin marked a symbolic turning point in intellectual life, not the least of which was T H Huxley's coining of the term "agnostic", giving a name to, and thereby legitimating the state of unbelief as a coherent, rational and above all moral alternative to religious orthodoxy. Linton captures the excitement of the period in Kirkland as her protagonist describes her own enthusiasm for the new world of science and her confidence that it was science, not religion, that offered the prospect of a more perfect society.

The fact that we had advanced so far already makes all the future possible and reduces pessimism to an absurdity; the consciousness of fixed laws robs history of all its elements of doubt, incompleteness and partiality. It makes infinite amelioration dependant on man's clear and understanding will; and shows how, by the scientific evolution of morals, systems of government, laws of health, physical well-being and education, we can accomplish things which hitherto have been only the dreams of poets and the fantasies of artists. ...in science were FACTS, and these were of the kind to make a new mental era - a new departure of thought for the whole world, as well as for myself individually. It was all in the air. The emancipation of the human intellect from superstition in the substitution of the scientific method for the theological, it was the great event of the time and made itself felt everywhere.

CK III. pp. 79, 81.

As historian Anthony Wood (who envisions the Victorian as male) suggests, whatever else he did, the typical Victorian was not one to ignore even the most controversial of arguments.

The bitter argument that raged for years reveals the Victorian at his best and his worst. He could be narrow-minded and hypocritical, but whether scientist or layman he could never shirk a conflict, if it seemed his inmost convictions were challenged. He might be wrong, but he could never remain indifferent.⁶⁴

Accusations of indifference are not ones that could ever be laid at the feet of Eliza Lynn Linton. From the earliest days of childhood to the very last days of her life she was never one to "shirk a conflict" and such was her confidence and conviction in her own

⁶⁴ Wood. p. 193.

beliefs that she remained undaunted even by conflict between two such philosophically immense and intellectually challenging leviathans, rarely missing an occasion to sponsor scientific knowledge. Linton's multiple texts offer not only a remarkable personal history of her development from Evangelical stoic to agnostic and her concomitant adoption of a deep and abiding faith in science but they also present the rare perspective of an interested laywoman's attempts to gain access to and to participate in scientific discourse and to promote science as an unambiguously anti-theist alternative to a religious system of belief.

V. Witch Stories: Superstition and the Ignorant Past versus Scientific Truth and Future Progress.

All the same, in spite of her endorsement of science Linton maintained the keen interest in folk tales and legends that had captured her adolescent imagination, an interest which often emerged in her later work and which she was able to draw on while researching Witch Stories (1861) an anthology of accounts of accusations of witchcraft and possession in England and Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In collecting these stories she had been obliged to use the Reading Room of the British Museum and other public libraries as her only source of information, hinting darkly about certain private collections that "concealed riches" to which she was not allowed access.⁶⁵

One of the points of Witch Stories was to demonstrate how far humanity had come since the cruel and irrational times from which its reports originated. What had once been accepted as incontrovertible evidence of sorcery and possession, Linton asserted,

⁶⁵ Linton, Preface to first edition Witch Stories (1861) reproduced in "Mayfair Library" edition, Chatto & Windus, London. 1883. p. ix. She had been working on this collection for some time as some of its numerous "Witches of Scotland" had previously appeared in 1857 in two articles, "Ancient Scottish Superstitions I" (Oct.) and "Ancient Scottish Superstitions II," (Nov.) in The National Magazine 1857. Drawing on the same material Household Words had also published two articles, "The Witches of Scotland," July 25, 1857; "The Witches of England," August 8, 1857. Barnes & Noble, London, are reputed to have reissued Witch Stories in 1972 although copies of this most recent edition prove much more elusive even than copies of the original. Linton was a familiar figure in the Reading Room; her first two novels, both of which had been praised for their historical content, had been researched there. Given her interest in the classics and her abiding fascination with history, and the evidence of her research skills it is possible that had circumstances been different she would have found her métier as an historian.

could now, in a more logical age be seen as the result of fraud, self-deception, disease or exaggeration on the part of the original protagonists or those who reported them. Her preface to the first edition (below) indicates that she was aware of the possibility that a number of her readers would remain unconvinced that claims of diabolical possession and supernatural powers were a consequence of ignorance and superstition. There is however an underlying sense of optimism that contemporary society, as it entered a new scientific age, one more readily prepared to “sift and examine”, was rejecting fable for fact.

I think we may apply all four conditions to every case reported; in what proportion, each reader must judge for himself. Those who believe in direct and personal intercourse between the spirit-world and man, will probably accept every account with the unquestioning belief of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; those who have faith in the uniform operations of nature, will hold chiefly to the doctrine of fraud; those who have seen much of disease and that strange condition called ‘mesmerism’, or ‘sensitiveness’, will detect the presence of nervous derangement, mixed up with a vast amount of conscious deception, which the credulity and ignorance of the time rendered easy to practice; and those who have been accustomed to sift evidence and examine witnesses, will be dissatisfied with the loose statements and wild distortion of every instance on record.⁶⁶

In contrast, there is a much more overtly anti-religious, and a good deal more pessimistic tone in her introduction to the 1883 edition in which her tenor is much more vigorous, even impatient, indicating that her confidence in the public to reject religion for science was no longer so assured.

Superstition dies hard; or rather, so far as we have yet gone, it does not die at all, but only changes its form and removes its locality. If educated people do not now believe in witches and Satanic compacts, as in the ignorant old times of which these Stories treat, they do still believe in other things which are as much against reason and as incapable of proof. And perhaps it may give some cause to think that assertion does not necessarily include truth, and that scepticism may be at times a wiser attitude of mind than credulity, when they remember that the best brains in England were once firmly convinced of the truth of possession and the diabolical art of witchcraft, and realise how many innocent men and women were murdered on the strength of those beliefs and to vindicate the glory and honour of God. So long as one shred of superstition remains in the world, by which human charity is sacrificed to an unprovable faith, so long will it be

⁶⁶ Preface to first edition of Witch Stories (1861) reproduced in the second “Mayfair Library” edition, Chatto & Windus, London. 1883. pp. ix-x.

necessary to insist on the dead errors of the past as a gauge for the living follies of the present.⁶⁷

From this subsequent preface it is plain that neither the intervening period nor her advancing age had caused her to mellow, in fact the opposite is demonstrated and it is plain from this later prologue that society had not advanced as far as she had either anticipated or hoped.

The first preface was written at a time in which Linton's religious stance was still uncertain and she had not yet rejected theism entirely. Nevertheless her editorial comments within the individual narratives make her animosity toward all forms of organised religion very clear and contained within her observations are candid statements that inform our understanding of the progression of her own interrogation of the nature of belief. The conclusion to "The Witches of Warbois", for example, offers an explicit challenge to established faith, a faith that Linton equates with a rejection of the humanitarian and civilizing influence of logic and reason in favour of the dehumanising and divisive influence of unscientific superstition and myth. Linton here can be seen to be playing out her own deliberations through the editorialising process. Her use of "chill and desolate scepticism" acknowledges that the rejection of faith may be a difficult and isolating course to take, but she reassures her reader, and perhaps herself, that it is the only truly humanitarian course to take.

How terrible to think that three human lives were sacrificed for such wild and wilful nonsense, and that sane and thoughtful and noble-minded people of this present day walk on the way toward the same faith! Better by far the most chill and desolate scepticism, which at least will light no Smithfield fires for any forms of creed or monstrous imaginings of superstition, than beliefs which can only be expressed and maintained by blood, and the culmination of which is the suffering and the destruction of all dissentients.⁶⁸

Linton's witch narratives, even though they are tales taken from earlier sources, are mediated via a variety of authorial strategies in order to critique both the society in which the events took place and that of its modern reader. She carefully avoids

⁶⁷ *Witch Stories*, preface to second edition, p. vii. This introduction is dated Oct. 1882 although the book itself was not published until 1883. Both were printed in the 1883 edition, the second preceding the first.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* "The Witches of Warbois" p. 187.

presenting the stories in a sensationalist style so that the various situations remain as prosaic as possible. Consciously stripping the events of their melodramatic and lurid elements and presenting them as an orderly narrative further serves to reinforce the disorderly and unsystematic nature of the reported proceedings.⁶⁹ She interrupts many of the individual narratives with her own judgments, contributing an authorial voice of reason to contrast the absurdity of the events described and she offers characterisations and comments that transparently manipulate the reader's interpretation of the texts. The accused in "The Countess" for example is presented as an amiable busy-body, "a clever shrewd woman...a bit of a doctress in her way...who thought she could do the afflicted child some good and had beside a love of putting her fingers into everybody's pie". The events are referred to as a "pitiful farce" and all charges (found to be the result of a private quarrel and an hysterical child) are dismissed. In concluding this particular narrative Linton emphasises the inflated and insubstantial nature of the episode, it was something made out of nothing, a "great balloon [that] fell to the ground in hopeless collapse".⁷⁰ Throughout Witch Stories Linton repeatedly stresses the spuriousness of the charges it describes and the "The Countess" is by no means the only example of her emphasis on the emptiness of the indictments contained in her collection, although the story is somewhat more unusual in that good sense and reason are seen to prevail.

Linton does not append an explicit personal judgment to every story in the collection (although her presence is always felt) but where she does her ridicule is unequivocal, and, in the manner of her later fiction, ecclesiastical men do not escape her particular attention. The indolence and partiality of Vicar Grand in Joshua Davidson for example, is presaged in her characterisation of the clergyman in "The Man of Hope and the Devil" which begins:

A young lawyer, a Mr Darrel, had a call to the ministry. He was made aware of

⁶⁹ The original articles from which the anthology was drawn were written in the months preceding her marriage to W. J. Linton (March 1858) and the degree of control she exerted over her narratives, and her condemnation of a dysfunctional and unruly society, may also have reflected her growing realisation of the degree of control that would be necessary to bring order to her new family circumstances.

⁷⁰ Witch Stories, "The Countess" pp. 227-228. In "The Second Curse of Pendle" Linton notes, in parenthesis, the frequency with which the accusations and testimony of young people precipitate events. She does not comment further except to add a possibly cynical, parenthesised apostrophe; "(how many of these sad stories come from children and young creatures!)" although the use of "creatures" may serve to emphasis the undeveloped (in Darwinian terms) nature of the accusers. p. 230.

this by the extraordinary sluggishness that came over him when he turned to open a law-book; so as preaching puritanical sermons extempore was less toilsome and cost less study than learning the intricacies of the Codex Anglicanus he became converted to extreme doctrines, and was principally regarded as a Man of Hope, skilful in casting out devils and marvellously apt at discovering witchcraft.⁷¹

It was not only religion that attracted Linton's iconoclastic attention (or her sardonic humour) her editorial comments also allowed an articulation of her republican sentiments. "The Langthorne and the Bahr-Recht" tells the story of Cristiane Wilson who in 1661 was accused of murder by witchcraft, her guilt being proved by a "furious blast of wind" on an otherwise cloudless day, and "no storm following after, there was no doubt of the satanic nature of the mighty puff" and that incontrovertibly this had been the devil's attempt to rescue her from her accusers. The satirical scorn evident in Linton's description of this satanic puff, as insubstantial as that in "The Countess" emerges frequently throughout the collection, often it is focussed on the ignorance and superstition of the local population, the "besotted public", though just as often the full thrust of her derision is aimed at the various religious institutions which Linton identified as colluding with and encouraging the persecution of the powerless. Linton's personal observations are rather lengthier in this particular story than in many of the others and plainly display the antipathy toward religious fanaticism that was to become more overt in her later work. "The Man of Hope and the Devil" includes her notion that the "zeal of the godly against witchcraft" had been first "stirred up" by a Papal Bull of 1485 in which the edict "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" was enacted, but that "Calvinistic Scotland" went on to outstrip even the "superstitious Papacy in her frantic piety" and was no better under the Presbyterians, the Elders or the Covenanters. And she dryly notes that the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 may have brought "satisfaction and pleasure" to the younger women under the dominion of Charles II and "joy and gladness to all loyal hearts" but brought "nothing save torture to the old, the poor and the despised" to whom it "mattered little whether Puritan or Cavalier, Presbyterian or Episcopalian, had the upper hand" because it was superstition which continued as "the greatest lord of all".⁷² As Linton's editorial comments indicate, to embrace the devil as deity was no different from the worship of God, both were

⁷¹ Ibid. "The Man of Hope and the Devil" pp. 187-188.

⁷² Ibid. "The Langthorne and the Bahr-Recht" pp. 91-94.

evidence of medieval ignorance, and her denunciation of the superstitious myth of witchcraft was merely an extension of her condemnation of what she identified as religious extremism.

The majority of the witches Linton describes are female and while some are young and beautiful (of these jealousy is the overriding motive behind their indictment) many are slow witted, aged and infirm, proving easy victims for their accusers. Others, significantly, stand on the margins of their societies, something that was noted at the time of the original trials. She quotes from earlier chroniclers of witchcraft trials, “three wise and sane men who lived in a time of universal madness” who described the unfortunate women who attracted the attention of the local witch finders.⁷³ John Gaule noted:

[E]very old woman with a wrinkled face, a furr'd brow, a hairy lip, a gobber tooth, a squint eye, a squeaking voice or a scolding tongue, having a ragged coate on her back, a skull-cap on her head, a spindle in her hand, and a dog or cat by her side,

was suspect, while Reginald Scot, in addition to listing the physical features which might attract unwelcome attention (adding a sullen or melancholy disposition to the catalogue) also includes habit, lifestyle and attitude to the list of characteristics likely to arouse suspicion. He counts the overly affectionate, scolds and those with “drousie minds” as particularly attracting attention, as do Papists and, significantly “such as know no religion”. Dr Harsnet, having ridiculed the sources that have gone to shape the idea of a witch as “heathen histriographers, wizzardising augurs, imposturising soothsayers...conceiters and coiners of fables” goes on to particularise with, as Linton puts it “more force and just judgement than might have been expected from one of his generation” those taken in by and participating in these witch trials. Linton’s evaluation of the credulous and naïve amongst her own contemporaries, drawn up 250 years later is remarkably similar to Harsnet’s judgment that such stories exploit the ignorance and gullibility of “children, fools, women, cowards [and] sick or black melancholick

⁷³ Ibid. “The Last of the Witches” p. 142. Linton’s “three wise men” and their “gifts” are, John Gaule, Select Cases of Conscience touching Witches and Witchcraft (1646) Reginald Scot, Discoverie of Witchcraft (1584) Dr. Harsnet, Declaration of Popish Impostures (c. 1600).

discompos'd wits".⁷⁴ Harsnet's implication presages Linton's argument that it is the "weaker brethren" and unmanly men who are most likely to be taken in by superstition and myth and her incorporation of his conclusion is clearly not inadvertent.

The carefully selected and mediated narratives in Witch Stories and the editorial strategies that Linton employed serve to offer a critique of the use and abuse of authority. The victims in her reports are often singled out for persecution because of their marginal positioning, either by class, belief or status. Linton carefully drew the reader's attention to Scot's observation that to "know no religion", placed an individual outside of mainstream society, thus persons who did not conform to common custom or were in some way unconventional prompted unease, arousing fear and provoking hostility. Women who lived alone, thereby challenging the notion of the dependent female, were particularly at risk.

Linton's derision of the circumstances and proceedings of the various witch-trials and her defence of the accused demonstrates a sympathy with transgressive women which was also apparent in much of her fiction. The unconventional and largely misunderstood women found in Witch Stories, set outside and punished by an ignorant and suspicious society that does not or will not recognise the truth, are not so very far removed from Linton's anti-heroines to whom she does not allow a happy conclusion but for whom she has a fond regard nonetheless. However, personal sympathy notwithstanding, many of the accused in Witch Stories, by deliberately challenging the social norm are, Linton suggests, in a sense colluding in their own downfall. Margaret Russill, for example, the condemned woman in "The Countess" is known for her presumptuousness; Margaret Agar in "Robin and his Servants", an "ill-conditioned old woman", whose greatest crime was her readiness to take offence and the passion with which she berated her enemies, is a woman who will not be silenced.⁷⁵ Contained within a number of these narratives there is also an underlying suggestion that many are knowledgeable women, 'white' witches punished for possessing greater wisdom or ability than was either customary or seemly. Women with the facility to ease labour pain and who act as midwives, who forecast the weather or who have healing skills are punished for making

⁷⁴ Ibid. "The Last of the Witches" pp. 141-142.

⁷⁵ Ibid. "Robin and his Servants" p. 192.

use of their knowledge, particularly if their treatment proves unsuccessful.⁷⁶ (Ignorance was also dangerous, the inability to repeat “The Lord’s Prayer” also being considered proof positive of being in league with the devil.)

In the light of her later woman question writings it is tempting to see Witch Stories as an early example of Linton’s effort to endorse hegemonic codes of female behaviour. She is certainly demonstrating the dangers faced by women who step out of established gender roles. On the other hand she also repeatedly emphasises the ignorance and brutality of these earlier societies and looks forward to a time when superstition has been overcome and reason prevails. In addition, the events that Linton chronicled in Witch Stories are in essence scarcely different from the trial faced by Joshua Davidson. His words misunderstood and his actions misconstrued, hounded from place to place and always attracting the animosity of conventional society that will not tolerate any view that does not conform to its own, Davidson’s death, at the hands of the “representatives of law and order...the champions of God and religion” is as much a ‘witch story’ as those named as such.⁷⁷

Maureen Moran argues that through the “polemical historical-biographical account” of Witch Stories Linton is offering a critique of “the male/female power structure in Western society”, that Witch Stories adheres to the “widespread view” that “witch-persecutions were a legalized form of brutality to women” and that the collection emphasises a sadistic masculine bloodlust legitimated and officially sanctioned by God and by law.⁷⁸ It may be that Moran is overstating the case for Linton’s emphasis of male “bloodlust”, but her assertion that Linton’s focus was on the establishing of a power structure is certainly correct. While it is impossible to separate issues of social status from gender it is axiomatic that, even more so in the sixteenth century than the nineteenth, institutional authority lay in male hands and that the final outcome of any case would therefore be by male decree. However, while, as Moran notes, “sympathy is evoked for the human vulnerability of the ordinary folk” she also asserts that the

⁷⁶ Ibid. “The Midwife’s Double Sin” pp. 68-69. “Bessie Skebister” p. 71. “Giffard’s Anecdotes” pp. 195-199.

⁷⁷ Davidson pp. 157-158.

⁷⁸ Maureen F. Moran “‘Light no Smithfield fires:’ Some Victorian Attitudes to Witchcraft” Journal of Popular Culture, Vol. 33, pt. 4. Spring 2000, p. 125, 129. Moran’s title is a quotation from Witch Stories.

female-authored texts on which her study focuses, despite their writers ranging “from the conservative to the radical”, each reaffirm rather than subvert traditional paradigms of authority.⁷⁹ Linton evinces a certain amount of sympathy with the “ordinary folk” who find themselves indicted for diabolical crimes, though her sympathy is often mitigated by the suggestion that by their unconventional or confrontational lifestyles many of the victims have colluded in their own downfall. In addition, it is frequently the “ordinary folk” who initiate the proceedings.

As has already been noted, Linton drew attention to the considerable numbers of children and young people who came forward with accusations of a diabolic nature, professing to be witnesses to or the victims of supernatural influence and exhibiting evidence of possession. She also observed that it was the “besotted public” who fuelled the agitation, adding revelation to revelation and encouraging common interest and the intervention of judicial authority. Also, although they are not in a majority, Linton includes a proportion of male accused, most of whom are found guilty and executed in the same gruesome manner as the women. The communities that Witch Stories describes are ones in which the most powerless, Linton’s “weaker brethren”, contested for a voice and for status in a brutal society in which right and reason were no guarantee of justice and in which power offered the only protection. In making these accusations, individuals or groups who were in themselves largely powerless, were asserting an authority over those even weaker than they were. Linton’s inclusion of male witches in her anthology may be seen as her attempting to establish a gender neutral space through which to interrogate class anxieties, reflecting contemporary apprehension not only surrounding the political and judicial authority of the church but also a deep-seated concern over social instability. Given that much of Linton’s later work was engaged with concepts of sexual difference, her (unsuccessful) attempt to efface the woman question from Witch Stories is indicative of the importance she invested in science and

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 125, 147. The other texts that Moran considers are Mrs. Gaskell’s Lois the Witch (1859) Charlotte Riddell’s Old Mrs. Jones (1884) and A Cross Line (1893) by George Egerton. Witch Stories is somewhat different from the other texts in that it is a mediated anthology of at least nominally true events, whereas the others are individual, fictional short stories.

reason to overthrow the superstitious irrationality that was to her synonymous with religious belief.⁸⁰

In a National Magazine article, "Black and Gray", Linton discusses the issue of superstition versus science, juxtaposing dangerous "black" superstition, which leads people to believe in witchcraft and devil-worship, with "grey", a harmless enjoyment of folk legends and tales of pixies, fairies and elves without allowing such stories to influence daily life. Discussing newspaper reports of events taking place in Sweden in which large numbers of children were supposed to be possessed by the devil, she argues that there is no place for the "black" in a modern world. Witch Stories and her early scientific articles clearly demonstrate Linton's belief that society was on the cusp of a new age; one that put the illogicalities of superstition behind it and looked forward to a bright new scientific epoch. Pointing out that the report from Sweden were coming at the same time as "the laying of an Atlantic cable, Fox Talbot demonstrating his camera and Professor Owen reconstructing palaeontological forms of life by the unerring indications of science", she urges her readers to look to the future and put their trust in science "which means both truth and knowledge" rather than looking backward to the dark days of ignorance.⁸¹

Technological and scientific progress was reshaping every aspect of society, advances in transport, communications, mass-production, medicine, social and municipal amenities were all changing the face of Victorian life. For a time it seemed that science might hold the key to the hitherto insoluble, that material limitations might be overcome and that the true nature of mankind would be revealed. In his 1872 Martyrdom of Man Winwoode Reade had identified in science the means of achieving social, political and economic perfection, envisioning a future in which science would eliminate class, gender, racial, national and international boundaries.⁸² Linton shared Reade's optimism, and like Reade believed that science drove out superstition. Belief in

⁸⁰ What Linton would have considered ungendered or gender neutral would of course now be recognised as a reflection of hegemonic, i.e. male values.

⁸¹ Linton, "Black and Gray" (sic.) National Magazine, Dec.1858. pp. 85-88. It is debatable whether Linton would have been likely to cite Owen so readily after the Ethnological Society debates in which Owen set himself as an opponent of evolutionary theory.

⁸² Reade, Ch. IV, "The Future of the Human Race".

“supernaturalism” she later asserted in Kirkland, belonged to “unscientific and uncultured minds, the abandonment of which is the first step outward towards enlightenment”, and the rejection of religious belief was a welcome sign of the maturation of intellectual society.⁸³

VI. Spiritualism and the Supernatural: The Search for Truth and Fear of the Consequences.

Whatever Linton’s opinion of the progress or perfectibility of mankind, Witch Stories indicates that she possessed a shrewd recognition of the reading public’s intense curiosity in the mysterious and uncanny, something that in her youth, she confessed, held a great fascination for her as well. In Kirkland she describes her absorption with the supernatural, though she stresses that such beliefs were as a consequence of her adolescent and untutored mind and which she abandoned as her understanding matured.

Undirected in my studies and unhelped in my thoughts, I read where I listed and came to such conclusions as seemed good to me. In the superstitious and pre-scientific period of life, when marvels are accepted as the established order of things, I was inclined to the mysterious and the weird at all four corners of my being. Thus, I believed in magic of a stately and learned kind; in alchemy and astrology; in the Rosicrucians and second-sight; in fortune-telling, magic crystals, and the Egyptian boy’s power of seeing the past and future in a few drops of ink held in the hollow of the hand; in mesmerism, ghosts and spiritual visitations generally; but by some good luck of latent common-sense I did not believe in vulgar witchcraft, though I did in the Witch of Endor... The supernatural powers of such men as Cornelius Agrippa and Albertus Magnus I took to be undeniable...The Indian jugglers, of whom my eldest sister sent home such thrilling accounts, were evidently mighty magicians; and he who had the courage could, if he would, conjure up the devil even to this day.

CK I. pp. 128-129

In her later writing often Linton utilized similar belief in the supernatural to identify characters whose intellect or principles she wished to signal as flawed. Lady Keswick in

⁸³ Kirkland I. p. 134.

The Second Youth of Theodora Desanges (1900) is on the “wrong side in almost every question of the day”⁸⁴ and in her misguided beliefs is:

an anti-vivisectionist, a vegetarian, a spiritualist, a transcendentalist in every fibre of her being, a sympneumatist, a thought-reader, and a believer in ghosts, pre-existence, the flight of the soul from the body, and the Mahatmas.

TD p. 181

While Lady Keswick is among the most extreme, Linton also uses the same terms in other works. Isabel Murray in In Haste and at Leisure is, like Lady Keswick a “Women’s Rights woman” and whose “expressed idea of life went on the lines of ‘Sympneumata,’ which she professed to understand”.⁸⁵ In the same text an ideal rural parish is reassuringly free of those “disturbing elements” which career like “wild horses” through larger communities. “Vaccination is submitted to; women’s suffrage was not so much as discussed; spiritism had no foothold, the Mahatmas did not exist...and belief in spooks and spectres was mainly confined to the uneducated and unenlightened”.⁸⁶ These unscientific and misguided beliefs not only manifested themselves in women, although where they occurred in men they were used as an indication of the unmanliness of the advocate. The effeminacy of Mr. Dalrymple, husband of a woman with whom the adolescent Kirkland becomes infatuated, is characterised by his “strange personal habits and his devotion to certain occult studies”. He is a vegetarian and teetotal, although he drinks large quantities of strong coffee, smokes ‘hachshish,’ takes opium and openly confesses to “a belief in magic, ghosts, and all the higher phenomena of mesmerism”.⁸⁷ His dissipation, his aestheticism and his unscientific beliefs all signal him as unmanly and manifestly unworthy of the incomparable woman to whom he is married. Dalrymple is plainly a prototype of the Wildean decadent aesthete of the *fin-de-siècle* and a forerunner of the self-gratifying

⁸⁴ The Second Youth of Theodora Desanges p. 180. Lady Keswick is of course also a “Women’s Rights woman to her fingertips”.

⁸⁵ In Haste p. 38. Pneumatology: the doctrine or the study of spiritual beings and phenomena; the belief in spirits intervening between human beings and God; also the study of the work, person, purpose and nature of the Holy Spirit.

⁸⁶ Ibid. pp. 63-64. Linton’s reference to “the Mahatmas” refers to Theosophism. Founded by Madame Blavatsky, Theosophism combined spiritualism with Eastern ideas of reincarnation, unity of the souls and Karma.

⁸⁷ Kirkland I. pp. 190-191. Linton draws a vivid and amusing picture of the dilettante Dalrymple, dressed in the height of fashion, with curled and scented hair, daintily picking his way along the rough Cumberland mountain roads, with his “twenty little dogs, all in pairs, streaming behind him like a herd of miniature wild beasts”. p. 189.

and amoral young men Armand Norris and Guy Delcroix who were to later appear in In Haste. Norris' principle was "liberty broadened to licence, and individualism independent of law" while Delcroix was:

great on the evidence of a spiritual life, and he advocated free trade in faiths as in all things else. There was not a superstition that he did not encourage, not a fad that he did not cultivate. From spooks upwards, he was the dry nurse of all the crazy faiths which grow like weeds and mushrooms in the damp soil of credulity and ignorance.

In Haste p. 48

It can be seen that Linton draws a connection between what she identifies as unscientific fads, including anti-vivisection (she defended vivisection as a horrible but crucial process, necessary for the improvement of social conditions and scientific understanding), vegetarianism (sentimental and unnatural) and epicureanism and the use of stimulants (self-indulgent and hedonistic) and support for the women's rights movement. By repeatedly making this correlation it may be that Linton was illustrating what she perhaps imagined as the transient nature of women's rights agitation, a transitory if dangerous passing phase, which, if held in check would eventually go out of vogue. If she could successfully establish such a connection in the minds of her readers they might be persuaded to withhold support for the Women's Movement for fear of being thought merely to be following popular fashion.⁸⁸

Just as the study of the nature and position of mankind was a vital and dynamic focus of scientific development, so too was the science of the mind, the systematic analysis of which had begun earlier in the century. Herbert Spencer, in the 1840s among the foremost exponents of Phrenology,⁸⁹ had in 1855 published his Principles of Psychology in which he argued that the mind is formed according to environmental influence, thus challenging, as Darwin was to do, a divine influence over the development or nature of humankind. The possibilities inherent in the power of the

⁸⁸ Paradoxically, Linton's vehement denunciation of women's rights and her exaggerated criticism of large numbers of the female population had the opposite effect, generating protest in defense of national womanhood even from those who shared Linton's patriarchal view of women's "proper" place.

⁸⁹ Also known as "bump reading"; the minute examination of the contours of the cranium in order to discern moral and intellectual qualities. No representation of the Victorian scientist's study is complete without a model of the human skull divided into its various zones of influence. George Henry Lewes was an enthusiastic advocate of phrenology, as was Robert Chambers. See Gay Weber, "Science and Society in Nineteenth Century Anthropology," p. 267. When George Eliot had her "bumps read", the practitioner, George Combe, concluded that "she was not fitted to stand alone," J. A. V. Chapple p. 111.

unconscious mind informed a number of Victorian semi-scientific interests, including spiritualism, and Linton's belief in the prospect, if not the fact, of spirit communication did not compromise her agnosticism because it was founded not on religious grounds but on scientific possibilities. Linton's conviction that mankind had not yet achieved its "crowning type", was reiterated in Kirkland and incorporated mankind's psychological potential.

I believe that there is an uncatalogued and perhaps undeveloped human force, which makes what the Americans call a magnetic man, and which is the substratum of truth underlying the falsehoods of spiritualism, the deceptions of hysteria, and the romances of religious fervour. We have not said the final word yet on the development of man: and this uncatalogued force may be one of the chief factors in the sum of future progress.

CK II. p. 25

A number of these pseudo-scientific practices engaged the finest intellects of the day, and although Linton took a systematic interest and was occupied by the theories behind them, none actually succeeded in convincing her of its genuineness. However, although Linton's stance on what she saw as unscientific and emotional caprice was unequivocal, her more ambivalent attitude toward spiritualism reflects the underlying uncertainty of the period, doubts which manifested themselves not only in the number and variety of religious sects which developed during the period but also by the growth of number of quasi-scientific, semi-occult movements which purported to offer insights into the mysteries of life.

In an age in which death was so familiar a feature of everyday life and few families escaped the experience of multiple bereavement, it is not surprising that so many were open to the concept of the supernatural. Perhaps the best known and most widely followed was the spiritualist movement. Founded on a conviction that it was possible to contact and to communicate with the spirits of the dead, spiritualism claimed to offer the means of uniting two worlds. The immortality of the soul after death is fundamental to traditional Christian belief and so consequently a form of transcendental communication did not necessarily conflict with Christian principles. Founded in the premise of spiritualism was the anticipation that if a link could indeed be established, and crucially, scientifically proved, not only would the corporeal and spirit worlds be

reconciled and the universal mystery of death resolved but the worlds of the supernatural and the scientific could each yield authority to the other and a social and intellectual concordat achieved between the increasingly divergent factions of religion and science.

With or without religious faith many of Linton's contemporaries exhibited some degree of belief in spiritualism, or like Linton herself searched, or at least hoped for empirical evidence of psychic communication. Science had after all revealed wonderful and hitherto unknown or unsuspected natural forces and Linton was not prepared to dismiss the possibilities of spiritualism out of hand, although neither was she prepared to accept its likelihood without proof. This position of what could be termed hopeful scepticism was widespread across intellectual society, as is indicated by the founding of The Society for Psychical Research in 1882. The SPR (still in existence and with the same goals) aimed to prove the actuality of some form of survival after death and actively sought empirical evidence of communication between this world and another. Its membership attracted active Christians, agnostics and the unresolved alike, amongst its associates were many of the leading scholars of the age, including Ruskin, Leslie Stephen, Gladstone and Tennyson.⁹⁰

Spiritualism not only represented a bridge between this world and the next; it also represented an area in which women could take a visible, active, even dominant role, much more so than was available through the established churches, and infinitely more than in scientific communities. Women acted as mediums, organised and controlled séances, even, as in the case of Madame Blavatsky, founded religions. Spiritualism empowered the women who were involved in it because it emphasised an individual, personal connection with the spirit world, a world that itself represented potentially

⁹⁰ The SPR attracted a number of the former members of the short-lived but immensely influential Metaphysical Society (1869-1880) who came together to consider many of the demanding and complex questions of the age. The 62 men who went to make up the membership of the Metaphysical Society made an astonishing list of the greatest intellects of the age. Aside from those already mentioned the list included leading churchmen; inc. the Archbishops of York and Westminster and the Dean of St Paul's; scientists, inc Huxley and Tyndall; jurists, inc. James Fitzjames Stephens and Frederic Harrison; historians, philosophers, critics, essayists, politicians and editors. It had been debated whether to invite George Eliot to join the number although in the end the membership remained entirely male. See Alan Willard Brown, *The Metaphysical Society: Victorian Minds in Crisis, 1869-1880*, Columbia University Press, New York. 1947.

limitless power to which women had access, and that had no apparent hierarchy or doctrine. It is no wonder that many women found it so appealing.

The publication, in the late 1850s, of her "Witch Story" articles and their subsequent anthology indicates that Linton was well aware of the rise in public interest in the supernatural, an interest which was addressed and explored in much of the literature of the time, fiction and non-fiction. Many of these were extensions of the gothic genre, the utilisation of the marvellous for sensation's sake, such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton's The Haunters and the Haunted (1859) and A Strange Story (1862). Others, such as Robert Dale Owen's Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World (1860) were written with much more serious intent and the search for the existence of the transcendental, as evidenced by Owen's text, continued into the 1880s with Mrs Oliphant's "Stories of the Seen and Unseen", including A Beleaguered City (1880) and A Little Pilgrim in the Unseen (1883). The immensely popular novelist Mrs Gaskell, published a number of "strange supernatural stories" including "The Poor Clare" (1856) and "Lois the Witch" (1859) even George Eliot tried her hand at an occult tale with "The Lifted Veil", published in the same year as Gaskell's "Lois".⁹¹ Indeed the appellation "ghost story" is virtually synonymous with "Victorian" a connection that was begun in no small part by a fashion for Christmas tales of the supernatural as exemplified by A Christmas Carol (1843), Dickens' exploration of the potential of the spirit world to enrich the "spirit" of humanity. Yet, Witch Stories notwithstanding and despite the commercial possibilities, it was an area that Linton chose, on the whole, not to explore.

Linton's own life was not without what could be interpreted as supernatural incident and it is notable, given that she drew heavily on personal experience, that she chose not to explore that acquaintance in her writing. The absence of significant occult incident points to an unease that Linton was not able to reconcile either in her own life nor in her writing; an area of uncertainty apparently so unsettling she uncharacteristically, and

⁹¹ Jenny Uglow, Elizabeth Gaskell, Faber & Faber, London. 1993, p.399. "The Poor Clare" Household Words XIV, Christmas Edition, Dec. 1856. "Lois the Witch," All the Year Round, Oct. 1859. Both Gaskell and Linton were prolific contributors to Dickens' Household Words and its successor All the Year Round, although they met only once. George Eliot's The Lifted Veil (1859), Virago, London. 1993, is an example of Sanders' select sub-genre of "pseudo-male, pseudo-autobiography". Sanders' Lives, p. 100. (See "The Woman Question" p. 54, n. 39.)

unlike many of her more successful contemporaries, declined major engagement. There are occasional exceptions, though these invariably occurred in shorter, more light-hearted pieces rather than in more obviously serious or extended works. In an early piece, "The Fairy Howk: A Legend of Cumberland"(1849) a virtuous woman marries a man who turns out to be an elf, their son, enervated by human existence is eventually taken away by the fairies, leaving his mother to die of a broken heart.⁹² A decade later an innovative short story, "Unfinished Histories" has a clairvoyant female narrator recounting the past or prospective experiences of a number of her fellow travellers on a London omnibus. Linton's psychic passenger is primarily occupied by her gift's ability to reveal the truth about human nature and in a neat conjoining of the issues of this world and the next, two "shabbily dressed awkward looking girls" with loud voices and a strident manner, are revealed as shining examples of womanly virtue. These plainly proto-New Women, "artist girls" whose occupations take them outside of the self-effacing womanly norm and into areas of potentially dangerous self expression nevertheless remain "within the temple walls – none the less active in the holy services" of female responsibility. One is "toiling bravely" to educate her younger brother and the other, a prototype of Perdita Winstanley and a reflection of Linton herself, has chosen her artistic vocation in order to earn her own living "rather than live at home in respectable semi-starvation and the whole suppression of all her living energies".⁹³ Linton's use of religious terminology indicates her buttressing of the values of the church establishment even though she did not adhere to its faith. Her dishevelled and ostensibly transgressive young women continue to exhibit the womanly virtues of altruism and self-sacrifice.

An 1872 short story "The Fate of Madame Cabanel" had an altogether less optimistic tone. Published in America in Appleton's Journal, and later reappearing in the collection With a Silken Thread (1880), "The Fate of Madam Cabanel" is the history of a young and healthy English woman whose vitality, contrasting with the ill-health and

⁹² "The Fairy Howk: A Legend of Cumberland" New Monthly Magazine, May 1849. Howk is a dialect word for a crevasse or ravine. The story is set in the isolated village of Caldbeck, the village where her father was minister and Linton spent part of her childhood. In Kirkland she describes Caldbeck as primitive and uncivilized, with "no sense of public decency, no idea of civic order and as little private morality". CK I. p. 7.

⁹³ Linton, "Unfinished Histories," National Magazine, May, 1858. p. 47.

wretchedness of the French Breton community in which (having married the local mayor) she comes to live, arouses jealousy and suspicion, leading inevitably to tragic consequences.⁹⁴ In her contemporary retelling of the kind of witch-hunt that Linton exposed in Witch Stories, Fanny Cabanel is a victim of the ignorance, superstition and human duplicity that, as Linton's later preface to Witch Stories made clear, were continuing to stand in the way of social progress. The backward community, "which science had not enlightened", and still clinging to the Roman Catholic faith which took "the unknown, not as magnificent, but as diabolical" situated so close to the English homeland serving as a reminder of the ever present threat to social equanimity posed by superstitious hysteria and a credulous population. "Swarthy, ill-nourished, low of stature and meagre in frame" the inhabitants of Pieuvrot are unable to comprehend or appreciate the "plump form, tall figure and fresh complexion of the Englishwoman" who comes to live in their midst, attributing their deteriorating conditions and endemic disease to the malign influence of the robust newcomer. Urged on by Adèle, the mayor's rejected lover, who accuses her replacement of being a "Broucolaque", a psychic vampire, the townspeople take advantage of Mayor Cabanel's absence to kidnap her, intending to throw her into a forest pit, popularly believed to be the haunt of werewolves and witches; the town's gravedigger having volunteered to first drive a stake through her heart. Arriving at the pit the mob discover that their supposed vampire is already dead, suffocated in the sack in which they have transported her, thereby proving her innocence. As Fanny's husband arrives too late to save her, the crowd disappear into the darkness, leaving an unrepentant Adèle to fling herself into the abyss rather than face capture.⁹⁵

"Madame Cabanel" has attracted the attention of critics and enthusiasts of vampire narratives and has been reproduced in at least two modern anthologies.⁹⁶ Christopher

⁹⁴ Linton, "The Fate of Madame Cabanel" (1880) in Dracula's Brood, Richard Dalby (ed.), Dorset Press, New York. 1987. pp. 43-44. First pub. Appleton's Journal, Vol. 8. Issue 196, supplement to Xmas edition, Dec. 28 1872. pp. 5-9.

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 43. In a somewhat incongruous twist the pleasingly plump form of Madame Cabanel is cited in a US investigation as evidence of shifting attitudes toward overweight and obesity in the late nineteenth century. Campbell Public Affairs Institute "How the Personal Becomes Political: Prohibitions, Public Health and Obesity" Rogan Kersh & James Morone, The Maxwell School of Syracuse University N. Y. p. 7. www.Maxwell.syr.edu/campbell/Library (12-6-03).

⁹⁶ Ibid. Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula, Christopher Frayling (ed.) Faber & Faber, London. 1991. pp. 280- 293.

Frayling notes the story's adherence to the conventions of the female gothic in which gothic imagery and characterisation are evoked in order to "tell stories which are *really* about 'hidden' aspects of female sexuality", though he also observes that given Linton's anti-feminist reputation, it is "clearly not intended" to be read as a new woman text. Richard Dalby describes the story as "a cogent study of primitive superstitions" and suggests that "Madame Cabanel" is an exploration of the phenomenon of the "psychic vampire" who feeds not on blood but on human vitality. Both Frayling's and Dalby's brief editorial comments note that the story is a neglected example of supernatural narrative.⁹⁷

Frayling's assertion that Linton's reputation discourages a reading of "Madame Cabanel" as a "new woman text" suggests that, had he, and by extension any reader not been aware of Linton's reputation, they would have interpreted the story differently. It has already been suggested that anonymity might have helped rather than hindered Linton's commercial success, one of the reasons for which was that the reader's pre-knowledge of the reputation and position inevitably skews their interpretation of her writing, causing, as evidenced by Frayling, context to eclipse content. "The Fate of Madame Cabanel", regardless of Frayling's assertion that it was "not intended" to be read as such nevertheless warrants consideration as an early example of that genre.

It was not only in this short story, a form which Showalter reminds us, offered the "flexibility and freedom" that New Women writers sought, but also in a number of her longer texts, that Linton explored, often with graphic candour the same issues of sexuality, gender and family relations, marital discontent and repressive social convention that engaged New Women, but which have evoked a very different critical response.⁹⁸ Ann Heilmann reminds us that New Woman writing was "a political tool in the dissemination of ideology" and that Linton "mobilized New Woman stereotypes to

⁹⁷ Christopher Frayling, p. 280, italics in original. Richard Dalby, p. 43, 11. An extensive website dedicated to stories of the supernatural has "Madame Cabanel" listed as a "must read" and makes the text available. www.horormasters.com/Themes/vampires.htm (12-6-03)

⁹⁸ Elaine Showalter (ed.) Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle, Virago, London. 1993. p. viii. In addition, as the title "Unfinished Histories" indicates, the narrative remains unresolved, thereby serving as an example of that familiar new woman form, a "fragment".

discredit the women's movement".⁹⁹ This is certainly true of much of Linton's later work, indeed toward the end of her life Linton's writing went beyond the dissemination of ideology as she attempted to reinforce what she saw as a rapidly disintegrating social structure. As a vociferous opponent of the person of the *fin de siècle* New Woman and all that she stood for it is perhaps understandable that Linton, despite her nonconformist lifestyle, is not considered a "daughter of decadence". However as Heilmann also notes, Linton's womanly heroines are consistently less engaging than her less physically attractive but much more sympathetic rebellious anti-heroines and it may be that further research would serve to disclose hitherto un-regarded links between Linton and her New Women adversaries.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Maureen Moran in "Light no Smithfield fires" draws a connection between Linton and the "paradigmatic" New Woman George Egerton and although the purpose of Moran's study is in no way to determine Linton's New Woman credentials, the establishing of a link between them serves to illustrate that as writers they may not be as different as might first be supposed.¹⁰¹ Sally Ledger reminds us that New Women, as writers, proto-feminists, literary creations and in the public imagination were possessed of multiple identities and it may not be beyond the boundaries of New Woman's inclusiveness that Linton, had her reputation been otherwise, could have joined their number.¹⁰²

It is not within the sphere of this thesis to interrogate the question of how authorial anonymity might or might not have transformed Linton's critical and literary status; even so there seems to be persuasive evidence to suggest that had her fiction been pseudonymous her literary reputation may have proved very different from that which she enjoys at present. It is probable that the appearance of Linton's name on the cover proved a mixed blessing for her publishers; her reputation as a social censor and for tackling indelicate subjects both attracted and repelled prospective readers. Henrietta Corkran's suggestion that the success of Linton's Joshua Davidson was helped rather than hindered by its anonymity and that sales diminished when its author was revealed

⁹⁹ Ann Heilmann, New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism, Macmillan, Basingstoke. 2000. p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 25.

¹⁰¹ Showalter, Daughters of Decadence, p. xii.

¹⁰² Sally Ledger, The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle, Manchester University Press, Manchester. 1997.

was, as Anderson points out “spiteful, but also perhaps correct”.¹⁰³ Many of the reviews of Linton’s books make as much reference to the reputation of their author as to the content of the narrative and like later critics consider the character of the author to be of greater consequence than the events of the narrative itself.¹⁰⁴

There is more than enough evidence to indicate that it was not lack of interest or knowledge of the subject, ancient and modern, which prevented Linton from exploring occult themes or utilizing supernatural events. It was not then unfamiliarity with the uncanny that dissuaded her from undertaking more work concerning the paranormal. It may simply have been the lack of facility for the creation of occult incident that prevented Linton from including the subject in her writing (although unkind critics may argue that lack of talent did not present an obstacle to a good many Victorian novelists, Linton included) although “Madame Cabanel” demonstrates her ability to create a powerful and convincing occult narrative. More likely is that the implications of supernaturalism, for a number of disparate but nevertheless compelling reasons, were too uncomfortable for Linton to seriously contemplate.

Supernaturalism trod a fine and often shifting line between religion and science, oppositions that Linton systematically endeavoured to drive as far apart as possible, Linton valued science not just as an alternative to religious belief but also as a means of destroying it. The possibility that the two beliefs could hold common or symbiotic ground or areas in which they could be reconciled would therefore challenge the very nature of Linton’s personal credo and her vision of the future of humanity. In addition, we have seen the ways in which science, already considered a masculine preserve had been utilized to further exclude women from its environs, reinforcing the notion of separate spheres on which Linton predicated her concept of a model society. Thus, to bring together the female world of spiritual belief with the masculine world of science

¹⁰³ Henrietta Corkran, Celebrities and I, Hutchinson, London. 1902. pp. 172-173. Anderson, Woman against Women, p. 148. Robert Chambers, author of Vestiges of Creation also encountered the same problem when his authorship was revealed, his record as an “encyclopedist and publisher of improving works” served to undermine the text’s scientific scholarship. Richard Fortey, “Everything but the Glue” review of Victorian Sensation: The extraordinary publication, reception and secret authorship of ‘Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation, James Secord, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. 2002. London Review of Books, 22 August 2002, pp.19-20.

¹⁰⁴ See below for reviews of Rebel.

would be to run counter to Linton's model of the ideal social order. Spiritualism and the supernatural, like religion, were areas permitted to women, even ones in which women could take a dominant position, Linton's conception of women's innate intellectual inferiority would therefore prejudice her against it for intellectual reasons.

Further, in allowing the possibility of the unconscious to influence the conscious mind Linton would be constrained to accept a loss of command, both personally and culturally, that would be intolerable to her. The preservation of authority and the defence of the means of social control were fundamental to Linton's persona and much of her work was predicated on the need for regulation and restraint. The underlying suggestion that to forfeit control would lead inevitably to social disorder, as in Under Which Lord? emerges repeatedly in her writing. If the unconscious mind, instinctive and spontaneous, was to be allowed any degree of autonomy then the more primitive selfish, materialist egotism against which Linton constantly stood vigil might threaten to overwhelm the altruism on which the progress of humanity depended. Allowing liberty to the unconscious presented the possibility that despite constant vigilance the mind might become unwittingly beguiled, open to the influence of a force over which she had no command. Both textual and biographical evidence suggests that Linton was torn between hope that a hitherto unknown dynamic force would eventually be revealed to enhance human understanding, and trepidation that it might prove uncontrollably wilful.¹⁰⁵

Linton was not alone in drawing the possibility of a connection between mesmeric power and loss of control. Wilkie Collins' iniquitous Count Fosco in The Woman in White (1860) is endowed with "strange mind powers" while the fractured personality of Dickens' Edwin Drood addresses the probability of locating his misplaced watch by means of repeating the state of drunkenness in which it was lost, echoing Collins' Franklin Blake concealing the Moonstone while under the influence of opium and then

¹⁰⁵ Nancy Anderson's advocacy of Linton's "unconscious feelings of Maleness" and her "unconscious lesbianism" in Woman against Women, p. 11, 13, and Valerie Sanders' suggestion that Linton possessed an "unconscious desire" for greater fluidity in the allocation of gender roles, Renegades, p. 107, suggests that Linton's misgivings about the power of the unconscious were well-founded.

having his actions revealed by the same method.¹⁰⁶ Linton's friend the Theosophist A.P. Sinnett, recalled her recounting that "in her youth she had been susceptible in a high degree to mesmeric influence" resulting in an "ever-present terror" that she might be "led into believing something which in spite of all appearances might not be true".¹⁰⁷ This may explain, despite her respect for Dr. John Elliotson, a leading proponent of mesmeric healing, her antagonistic attitude to his speciality. Elliotson had attended Linton's father during his last illness and was at the time well known as a physician to the literati. Elliotson had successfully treated Wilkie Collins and Dickens and was held to have saved the life of Thackeray who in gratitude dedicated Pendennis (1848-1850) to him. Collins refers explicitly to Elliotson in The Moonstone (1868) as he has Dr. Jennings explain the theory of unconscious behaviour to Franklin Blake, "I am now referring to you one of the greatest of English physiologists. The book in your hand is Dr. Elliotson's *Human Physiology*".¹⁰⁸ At the time of their first meeting Linton describes Elliotson as a freethinker, but some years later when their acquaintance was renewed his intellectual acuity had deserted him, "old and broken" he had been "converted to Christianity by way of spiritualism and messages from the dead". Linton's conviction that Elliotson's spiritualist conversion must have been as a result of senility rather than an intellectual conversion is stressed by her rather sad observation that though he died soon after "his true self had died long before".¹⁰⁹

Linton's re-acquaintance with Dr. Elliotson had taken place at the home of a close friend, Mrs. Milner Gibson, and it was there that Linton attended a number of séances, including several conducted by the most famous (or infamous) medium of the day Daniel Dunglas Home. Robert and Elizabeth Browning had encountered Home in Florence where Elizabeth, a keen advocate of Home's skill as a medium, is recorded as

¹⁰⁶ Wilkie Collins, The Woman in White (1859-1860) Penguin, London. 1994. Charles Dickens, The Mystery of Edwin Drood (1870) David Paroissien (ed.) Penguin. London. 2002. Ch. 3. Wilkie Collins, The Moonstone (1868) Penguin, London. 1994. p. 385.

¹⁰⁷ A P Sinnett to Layard, May 18 1899 in Layard, p. 176. Alfred Percy Sinnett (1840-1921), editor, writer and occultist, author of The Occult World (1881) and Esoteric Buddhism (1883). Biographer and literary executor of Madame Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society. Mesmerism, a semi-occult form of hypnosis in which the practitioner is said to be able to gain control and induce physical and psychological change in the subject without physical contact.

¹⁰⁸ James Lynn died in 1855. John Elliotson (1791-1868), who also pioneered the use of the stethoscope, is one of the many "lost" Victorians whose life and work are fascinating.

¹⁰⁹ Kirkland II. pp. 299-300.

writing that “when people gather round a table now it isn’t to play whist”.¹¹⁰ Later, in London she attended a séance with Robert, who was not as impressed with Home as his wife. Browning’s “Mr Sludge, the Medium” (1864) projected to reveal the duplicity of those who claimed to be able to contact the spirit world, was almost certainly informed by his acquaintance with Home, whom Linton described as “the notorious levitating medium”.¹¹¹ Recognizing that Linton would prove a “useful ally could I but be caught” Home arranged a séance for her particular benefit in which he claimed to make contact with the spirit of a dead child of whom Linton had been “passionately fond” and who had been named after her. Linton confesses that when he first describes the child she was “overcome”, but when he refers to the child as Eliza, a name by which the girl had never been known, his mendacity is revealed and Linton is “saved from all after danger of credulity, and [left] with a clear mind and untroubled senses to watch and weigh all that I saw”.¹¹²

Knowing their shared interests in the subject Dickens sent Linton an article concerning spiritualism, with the purpose of keeping her “*au courant* to the subject” and in their correspondence they discuss the willingness of Home’s followers to be deceived. Dickens is unequivocal concerning Home’s performances and contained in his phraseology is a juxtaposition of the scientific and the religious, indicative of his own thoughts on the fundamental tensions between the two beliefs.

Mr. Hume, or Home (I rather think he has gone by both names), I take the liberty of regarding as an impostor. ...But be assured that if he were demonstrated a humbug in every microscopic cell of his skin and globule of his blood, the disciples would still believe and worship.¹¹³

There is however conflicting evidence concerning Linton’s belief in spiritualism. She was certainly well known in spiritualist circles and as we have seen participated in a number of séances. In Kirkland and in letters reproduced by Layard she denies that she had ever been convinced of its claims and the aforementioned A. P. Sinnett, and Dr.

¹¹⁰ van Thal, p.38.

¹¹¹ Kirkland II. p. 16-17.

¹¹² Ibid. II. pp. 20-22. The child Lizzie, youngest daughter of William and Emily Linton, whose care Eliza Linton undertook even before Emily’s death, had died in Dec. 1857.

¹¹³ Charles Dickens to Linton, 16 Sept. 1860, in Layard, p. 166.

John Ashburner, had both unsuccessfully attempted to “convert her to the faith”.¹¹⁴ However, Layard notes that Harvey Orrinsmith, who had accompanied Linton to a number of séances, had told him that Linton was “absolutely credulous in spiritualistic matters” and that she thought Home’s performances “miraculous”. Orrinsmith also records that after a séance given by a Mrs. Marshall of Holborn, a “vulgar medium of some vogue at the time” where there was much “table-turning and tilting [and] preposterous answers rapt out to idiotic questions” he and Linton had “wordy strife” when he pronounced the events trickery and sleight of hand.¹¹⁵ Layard is of the opinion that if she had ever harboured a belief in spiritualism and mesmeric influence it was “but short-lived”¹¹⁶ and it seems most probable that any credence she had given to the subject was dispelled in line with her increasingly anti-religious convictions and concomitant confidence in science to reveal the truth of human nature. Any “inclination to the mysterious and weird” that remained was held tightly in check, as Sinnett’s account of a later (c.1884) discussion indicates.

I remember when Mrs. Linton happened to meet [at our house] three or four of our intimate friends (the late Dr. Anna Kingsford among the number), all of whom were absolutely familiar in their personal experience with super-physical phenomena of various kinds, and to whom the *fact* that such phenomena took place- which was at that time the belief that Mrs. Linton feared to entertain lest it should be false – seemed such a long passed threshold of knowledge that doubts on that subject had a ludicrous aspect. I remember Mrs. Linton asking our friends with impressive gravity had they themselves personal experience of such and such occurrences, and when they gave her that unqualified assurance, I remember that she at last sprang up from her seat, saying, ‘ If I stay any longer I shall be mesmerised’.¹¹⁷

Sinnett told Layard that Linton believed herself vulnerable to mesmeric influence, an impression that she had gained following an incident in her adolescence. In Kirkland

¹¹⁴ Layard, p. 173. Dr. John Ashburner, author of Studies in the Philosophy of Animal Magnetism and Spiritualism, W. Horsell, London. 1855.

¹¹⁵ Harvey Orrinsmith to Layard, Layard, pp. 167-168. Layard does not give a date to either the events described or his subsequent correspondence with Orrinsmith; it seems most probable that the incident was contemporary with Linton’s correspondence with Dickens on the subject and that Layard’s communication with Orrinsmith took place after Linton’s death. Harvey Orrinsmith was the son of William J. Linton’s former business partner John Orrin Smith (his son united the two names).

¹¹⁶ Layard, p. 168.

¹¹⁷ A P Sinnett to Layard, 18 May 1899 in Layard, p. 176, emphasis in original. Dr. Anna Kingsford (1846-1888) qualified as MD (Paris 1880) writer, vegetarian, anti-vivisectionist, convert to Roman Catholicism; later founder of the Hermetic Society (1884) with the aim of reconciling Christianity with Eastern religions.

she tells of an episode in which she experienced a “curious bit of hallucination”. On Halloween night, challenged to face the “supreme trial”, eating an apple by candle light while staring into a mirror, she imagined she saw the face of the devil, with “dark, mocking sinister face...dark hair waved above the eyebrows – the eyes deep-set, dark and piercing – the nose long and pointed – the thin mouth curled into a sneer” looking back at her. With hindsight Linton was able to rationalise the incident as the result of “the private penances and eccentric self-discipline” to which she was then subjecting herself. Nevertheless the episode stayed with her “long after”, inducing the sounds of rushing wings, mingled whisperings and voices in her head so loud they would wake her from sleep, and which she likened to those “which haunted Christian when passing through the Valley of the Shadow”.¹¹⁸ In fact it stayed with her enough not only to warrant explication in Kirkland but also to provide a defining moment in “The Old Lady’s Story” in which the central character, named Lizzie, repeating Linton’s actions, sees the face of a dark and sinister man who soon after moves into the area and who exerts a strange fascination over Lizzie, who very nearly marries him, and a fatal influence over her sister (inevitably called Lucy) whose death he inexplicably causes.¹¹⁹ Regardless of Linton’s later satirising the eager followers of the supernatural, in the same way as she derided religious enthusiasm, her own standpoint was not so uncompromising as to allow her to explore the issue with ease. Even though she eventually dismissed the likelihood of the truth of supernatural phenomena, it clearly had a greater influence than she was perhaps prepared to admit. Sinnett acknowledges that he repeatedly attempted to convert her to his philosophy but that she “remained resolutely agnostic in all such matters”, adding the coda that “her mental attitude was honestly agnostic, and far removed from the dogmatically denying attitude of the commonplace materialist”.¹²⁰ What Linton desired, and what neither Sinnett or any of her other supernaturally inclined friends could give her, or any number of purportedly mystical incidents could provide, was irrefutable scientific evidence of spiritual phenomena.

¹¹⁸ Kirkland I. pp. 113-115. Popular superstition said that a young girl, eating an apple (the forbidden fruit) under these circumstances would see the face of her future husband reflected in the mirror. Linton is alluding to Christian’s passing through the Valley of Humiliation in Bunyan’s A Pilgrim’s Progress (1678) and Psalm 23, Verse 4 “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death”.

¹¹⁹ Linton, “The Old Lady’s Story” Household Words, Dec. 1853. pp. 5-9.

¹²⁰ Layard p. 177.

Yet all the time I was yearning to believe – to be forced by irrefragable proofs to accept one undoubted authority, which would have ended for ever certain gnawing pains. Those proofs never came.

CK II. p. 24-25

The “undoubted authority” that she sought and the proofs that she desired continued to be manifest in the discipline in which she had since girlhood placed her faith, and from which she was largely excluded, the verifiable world of science.

VII. The Manliness of Science.

Since the sciences was not considered an appropriate province for female involvement and discussion of most scientific topics, particularly in mixed company, was judged unseemly, as a novelist Linton was faced with a dilemma; how to articulate her own approval and support for science whilst maintaining conventional propriety in the situations in which she placed her female characters. In addition, if women’s scholarship was considered inevitably flawed by the very fact of their sex, how was Linton to disseminate her view of science without attracting the level of opprobrium that she experienced when writing on the woman question and indeed, how was she to be taken seriously? We have seen how the tactics she chose to employ differed according to the form in which she was writing and in the manner and type of the publication in which it was to appear. Also, for the most part her rendering of the science question was rather more subtle and diplomatic than her treatment of other “questions” of the time. Whichever approach she chose to employ she left the reader in little doubt about where her own sympathies, and theirs, should lie. In Under Which Lord? for example, she has Hermione Fullerton entering her husband’s study and shuddering “half frightened, half disgusted” at what she deems the evidence of “diabolical” Darwinism that she finds there; the conflict between religion and science is explicitly acknowledged.

On the table stood three skulls, with the plaster casts of the brains corresponding; the one was that of a chimpanzee, the other of a Bushman, the third of a European – evidently ranged there to illustrate some infidel point in comparative craniology. A book of anatomical plates was lying open – horrid things suggesting an endless series of monster worms to the pretty woman who

thought that those portions of the living human clock-case which custom left uncovered were quite enough for an ordinary man's contemplation; and then to dive into the secret of the works was abominable; - save when a man was going to make medicine his profession, and to receive money for his disagreeable knowledge. Specimens of rocks and fossils were scattered about among odd bones and the more complete skeletons of fish and reptiles; the microscope was adjusted for use; the electric machine was uncovered; all the objectionable furniture of this most objectionable seat of learning was in full display, and the very air seemed tainted with materialism and irreligion.

UWL II. p. 104

In this short passage can be found in microcosm Linton's alliance with science as she describes Hermione's offended sensibilities in terms that dismiss her as illogical and reactionary, features that Linton plainly ascribes to her gender. The reader is reminded that Hermione is "pretty", an adjective more commonly applied to a superficial young woman with no thoughts beyond the commonplace and conventional, rather than to a mature woman in her fourth decade, its use here clearly stressing the immaturity of Hermione's mind. This suggestion is reinforced by Hermione's reductive belief that to strive to expand knowledge and understanding, to seek the truth, is not only misguided but also inherently evil. Linton draws attention to the illogicality and the hypocrisy of Hermione's attitude to science, the woman's resistance to advanced thought is shown by her dismissal of the microscope and the electric machine, artefacts that represent technological progress, as "objectionable" and her rejection of the wonders they reveal as fantastical and monstrous. Linton has her rejecting the "materialism and irreligion" of science while at the same time emphasising her cupidity in which the essence of human life is reduced to a clock-like mechanism and asserting that the advancement of human understanding should only be undertaken as part of a commercial process, an economic transaction in return for acquiring "disagreeable knowledge".

Linton's next novel, published the year after Under Which Lord? also had a man of science, if not a scientist as its hero. The Rebel of the Family (1880) tells the story of Perdita Winstanley, one of three daughters of a poor but genteel widow whose sole concerns are the maintenance of appearances and that her daughters should contract good marriages. Perdita, an outspoken democrat, perpetually at loggerheads with her conventional family, takes up a position at the Post Office Savings Bank and begins to

attend the meetings of the West Hill Society for Women's Rights, falling under the influence of its president Bell Blount. Confused and isolated, Perdita meets Leslie Crawford, a high street chemist, who rescues her physically, politically and morally - first from her contemplation of a watery suicide and then from the grasp of the nascent women's movement and the predatory clutches of the lesbian Blount. Perdita's insistence on plain speaking and her relationship with the socially inferior Crawford threaten the marriage prospects of her sisters and, refusing to give up her friendship with the Crawford family she is banished from home. As penury makes Mrs Winstanley's social position, and therefore her daughter's marriages untenable, Crawford steps in, for Perdita's sake, to offer economic salvation. Her sisters make their respective mercenary marriages and all concerned continue to consider Crawford inferior and Perdita foolish and irresponsible.¹²¹

Leslie Crawford is the epitome of Linton's masterful ideal, whom she establishes from the outset as a superior being. Tall, handsome, chivalrous and with innate authority, his positive influence over Perdita is immediate.

His grey eyes, as full of honesty as her own, looked into hers with compassionate inquiry; his grave face, composed, steady, full of thought and sadness, seemed the reflex of her own sorrow, but with more control and with more of the peace of endurance. His voice was gentle but firm; his manner protecting and commanding. He seemed to have read the secret writing of her poor wayward, passionate soul, and to be standing there, guarding her from herself.

Rebel p.112.

Through the traditionally "happy ending" of Perdita's imminent marriage to Leslie Crawford she is free to abandon her hard won employment with the Post Office Savings Bank, which is only second best to marriage, "work is only a substitute!" because she has learnt:

to appraise the things of life at their true value; to [think] love is a better dowry than rank; a woman's duties higher than her rights; and the quiet restrictions of home more precious than the excitement of liberty, the blare of publicity.

Rebel pp.122, 372-373.

¹²¹ Leslie Crawford was most likely named after Linton's late friend, Pres. of the Ethnological Soc. John Crawford. Linton's admiration for Crawford, "no truer soul ever lived than he," (Layard, p. 152) is reflected in his near namesake.

She is redeemed and protected by her man of science, the embodiment of logic and reason, who endorses the notion of separate spheres because of men's innate, and Linton implies, scientifically sanctioned, superiority.¹²²

The responsibility for their future contentment is placed firmly in female hands; the reader is invited to imagine that Perdita's marriage will be a successful one because she is apparently content to assume the mantle of dutiful domestic goddess and acquiesce in her scientific husband's unassailable supremacy.¹²³ Perdita Winstanley defends her future husband and endorses his occupation, arguing that Crawford, "though he is a chemist...is not like a tailor or a shoemaker. A chemist must be a man of education and is next thing to a doctor".¹²⁴ Clearly Perdita, unlike Hermione, regards medicine, even at one step removed, as a worthy and respectable profession. Linton does not undermine the essential womanliness of either woman by making them scientific themselves, and neither woman is expected to participate in their husband's work, but they are required to concede that men's knowledge, moral acuity and reason are superior to their own and to acquiesce in that superiority.

Always the iconoclast, Linton uses the union of the High Street chemist and the bold egalitarian as a means of both questioning and subverting conventional class constructs. Like Linton herself, Rebel's heroine, though the granddaughter of a bishop is also a rebel and a democrat, honouring truth and human worth above social position.¹²⁵ Her characterisation of Perdita's mother's snobbish and deceitful affectations satirises the façade of class convention. Mrs Winstanley, the impoverished widow of an army officer, ekes out an existence of genteel poverty and her greatest concern is with the maintaining of appearances, "reduced by her comparative poverty to somewhat

¹²² Perdita's prosaic choice of career is, by her own admittance boring and she gives it up without regret. It hardly affords her the "blare of publicity" nor, beyond the principle of employment itself, the "excitement of liberty" that she seems to claim. The reader is given the distinct impression that had her career been truly engaging, as Linton's was, she would have been less willing to forsake it.

¹²³ In Linton's implied future the assumption that the Crawford/Winstanley alliance will be a happy one appears to go against her usual representations of marriage as a site of conflict, subjugation and misery. We are asked to accept that the couple's mutual love and respect will continue into their future lives, although given that Linton habitually denied her characters a happy marriage regular readers must have doubted that particular outcome.

¹²⁴ Rebel pp.137-138. Linton's choice of tradesmen is interesting, tailors at least were known as radicals.

¹²⁵ Linton toyed with the idea of calling the novel The Bishop's Granddaughter, Layard, p. 220.

ignominious straits...she held up her head as superbly as if her pence had been pounds”, and conscious of her inherited respectability she “clung to her stately rags as to a talisman that gave her honour if not sufficiency”.¹²⁶ Perdita, in forming an alliance with a man considered beneath her, and against the pecuniary prospects of her sisters, challenges all that her mother considers most important. (Although Perdita’s declaration that Crawford is “not like a tailor or a shoemaker [but] the next thing to a doctor” suggests that her democratic principles do not extend far out of her class.) Mrs Winstanley continues to hold her prospective scientific son-in-law in contempt, even when he steps in to save her from financial ruin she cannot reconcile herself to his inferior rank. Similarly, the moneyed industrialist and the English aristocrat to whom Perdita’s sisters are betrothed each prove themselves crass and hypocritical, the former arrogant and condescending, and the latter snobbish and duplicitous. Neither bears comparison with the natural nobility displayed by Leslie Crawford, who like his scientific namesake is a “truer soul” than either of his future brothers-in-law and personifies Linton’s own vision of the “crowning type”.

When Mrs Winstanley, forced by good manners to thank Crawford for his generosity, which she acknowledges is selfless and “saving her from a dreadful embarrassment”, cannot restrain herself from adding “what a pity that you should be a chemist”, his reply exhibits the egalitarian philosophy common to all Linton’s sympathetic characters and which in her terms identifies him as a superior specimen of English manhood.

‘Rather, what a pity you should think a man’s merits to be determined by his profession, and that a shopkeeper cannot have the instincts of a gentleman!’ ...
‘What a pity that you should make artificial classification of more account than natural worth, and hold a titled scoundrel as superior to an honest commoner. It is the false god of Caste which is the ruin of English society – this absurd belief in rank *per se* which is taking the true manhood out of our country.’

Rebel p.371

Like Joshua Davidson exposing the arrogant pretensions of Vicar Grand, Crawford’s innate dignity and self-respect expose his social “superiors” as *poseurs*; although unlike in Davidson, in Rebel we are predicted an optimistic outcome. It seems that in the honest and egalitarian characters of Crawford and Perdita Linton is suggesting a means

¹²⁶ Rebel p.1.

of achieving national redemption. In positing the expectation of a successful marriage Linton is suggesting that in their democratic principles, their sincerity, their rejection of pretension and perceived obligation to duty, and their steadfast adherence to the notion of separate spheres, they offer not only the model of a perfect marriage but also the means of achieving a perfect society.¹²⁷

However, the concluding statement of the narrative, written with the underlying irony that Linton does not seem able to resist, invites the reader to question its sanguine conclusion.

All the same he was only a chemist and druggist, serving the public with rhubarb and colocynth across a counter; and she was the daughter of a major and the granddaughter of a bishop – a rebel and a democrat, not honouring as she should, the purple lappet which fell across her soft smooth shoulders – the blueness of the blood which ran in her wicked veins; - not honouring anything so much as human worth and the truth of things, and that Love which alone makes our life divine.

Rebel p. 373

In addition, intellectual anxieties surrounding the implications of evolutionary theory are also embedded in the relationships of the Winstanley sisters and their prospective husbands. If evolution meant “survival of the fittest”, the best adapted to changing environmental circumstances, the most “fit” to survive is the suitor whom Perdita rejects (who then goes on to marry her sister Thomasina) the abhorrent but materially successful *nouveaux riche* Brocklebank, rather than the “best” who is clearly Crawford. The tension between what is best and what is fittest reveals itself in the ambiguity of Linton’s juxtaposing of the two men.¹²⁸

The intimation is that natural nobility may not prove to be enough and even in this most apparently blissful of alliances Linton has embedded a destructive germ, the heroic Leslie Crawford is, *à la* Mr Rochester, a flawed ideal. Like Rochester, Crawford has an insane wife confined, not in the attic but a lunatic asylum, where she has been since the

¹²⁷ Linton’s own experience of inter-class marriage was not a happy one. W. J. Linton was considered to be beneath Eliza Lynn when they married; the same was said of her mother Charlotte when she married James Lynn.

¹²⁸ Herbert Spencer was the first to use the phrase “survival of the fittest” in *Principles of Biology* (1865) pt 3, Ch. 12, sec. 164. It implies the successful multiplication of the best adapted for survival.

birth of her child.¹²⁹ Recovering her wits only long enough to beg her husband's forgiveness for a wrong done to him before the child's birth, she conveniently dies leaving only her own mother, and Perdita, unaware (and apparently not even curious) as to the terrible crime that caused her to lose her sanity. The Academy in its review of the novel referred to the mystery (that Bois Duval had seduced Crawford's wife and was father of the child whom the chemist has brought up as his own) as "grotesque" and Perdita's lack of curiosity, "simply incredible".¹³⁰

Contemporary reviews of The Rebel of the Family were generally not favourable and most commented on the incongruity of its central characters and some voiced doubts regarding its concluding marriage. Linton's former vehicle The Saturday Review describes Rebel as demonstrating, "a great deal of cleverness and also a great deal of oddity". It points to the inconsistencies in the story and confesses that it does not know, even at the novel's conclusion, whether the author is disposed to applaud or condemn the "unattractive, if conscientious, ways of the heroine". Either way the reviewer, with a dash of irony, cherishes "a secret doubt that there is not a considerable touch of sarcasm in the author's eloquent approval of her heroine's marriage with a chemist and druggist, whom she exalts as a hero because he has pulled her back from the brink of the pond in Kensington;" and seems most concerned with the future happiness of the groom, commenting "We trust that she was as happy as may be with her chemist and druggist, but we do not think it unlikely that he got considerably bored with her".¹³¹ The Saturday

¹²⁹ The similarity of the names of Brocklebank in Rebel and Brocklehurst in Jane Eyre are not the only resemblance between the two men; both men are snobbish, insensitive and hypocritical, the religious fervour and cold, self-righteous oppression of Brontë's "black marble" clergyman are matched by the class-obsessed materialism of Linton's pompous ironmaster. Nor is the existence of an insane wife the only parallel between the two narratives. The reader's introduction to both Jane and Perdita finds them reading in the seclusion of a window seat, literally and metaphorically, physically and intellectually isolated from their immediate and wider society. Rebel is not the only one of Linton's novels to bear a resemblance to Jane Eyre; Valerie Sanders points out a number of similarities between Grasp Your Nettle (1868) and Jane Eyre, including a parallel between Linton's hero Jasper Trelawney and Brontë's Mr Rochester. Sanders, Renegades, p. 104. In addition, Brocklebank has more than a little of Dickens' Josiah Bounderby about him.

¹³⁰ The Academy, 19th February 1881. p. 131, in "Appendix A: Contemporary Reviews of The Rebel of the Family," in Rebel, 2002. p. 402

¹³¹ These shrewd observations concerning Linton's judgment of Perdita serve to highlight her awareness that a compulsion always to speak your mind and to do what is right, rather than what is expedient, may be honest and truthful but it does not always result in a happy conclusion. Linton's own impulse always to speak, write and do what she believed to be right, and the concomitant urge to draw attention to the "wrongs" of others, not only attracted much personal condemnation but also, as the unhappy outcome of her relationship with Edward MacDermot demonstrates, was the cause of great sadness.

Review was kinder than most other periodicals, which were more likely to damn the story with the faintest of faint praise. Amalgamating criticism of the text with criticism of its author the British Quarterly Review allows that it is “in several respects an advance” on Linton’s previous novel, although it “goes without saying that it is full of Mrs Lynn Linton’s satiric reference and reflection”. In similar vein the Athenaeum agreed that “Mrs Lynn Linton appears to much greater advantage” in The Rebel of the Family than in her earlier story, adding that the reading public, who were “pretty well acquainted with the author’s merits and defects” would find that it “cannot rank above the second class of novels, but among them it merits a high place”.¹³²

To Perdita, Leslie Crawford is a man of science; he is emphatically “a chemist”, whereas her mother disparagingly refers to him as a “druggist”. The twin terms are indicative of the transition between the pre-scientific apothecary-druggist and the establishment of the modern pharmacist-chemist. In her concluding statement Linton conjoins the two terms, a reference that was singled out by the Athenaeum and The Saturday Review which both refer to Crawford’s twin occupations of “chemist and druggist”. The ambiguity that the Saturday reviewer identified in the characterisation of Perdita Winstanley can also be identified in the depiction of her prospective husband. Prosaic as his occupation may seem, it is likely that the description “druggist” would suggest to contemporary readers a darker, more mysterious activity, that of the use and distribution of opium. Opiates were widely used, both medicinally and recreationally by all sections of society and opium and its derivatives were commonly and legally available. In fact, its use was so widespread and conventional that it has been observed that rather than religion it was in fact “opium that was ‘the opium of the people’”.¹³³

However, the introduction of legislation in the 1860s draws attention to changing perceptions of opium use in which the respectable English opium eating of Thomas de

¹³² The Saturday Review, vol.50, no.1308, Nov. 20 1880, pp. 650-651; The British Quarterly Review, January 1881, p. 116; Athenaeum, no. 2771, Dec. 4 1880, p. 741. Rebel 2002. p. 399, 401, 400. The previous novel mentioned was Under Which Lord?

¹³³ Matthew Sweet Inventing the Victorians, Faber & Faber, London, 2001. p. 97. The Pharmacy Act (1868) outlawed the selling of opium from handcarts and by street vendors, limiting its sale to licensed dispensers.

Quincey gives way to a disreputable and squalid alien habit of smoking.¹³⁴ The use of opium, the criminality of its users, and the opium dens where the drug was said to be consumed in great quantity held a horrid fascination for the Victorian reading public. Wilkie Collins' The Moonstone has the use of opium central in its events, while Dickens' The Mystery of Edwin Drood begins with the choirmaster of Cloisterham cathedral experiencing narcotic hallucinations surrounded by the squalor of a Chinese opium den, and variations of this scene continued to be played out over the following decades.¹³⁵ The apparent inconsistency between the legal and routine practice of opium use and its literary representation as an insidious means of social disruption has been identified as emblematic of a playing out of class anxieties and a growing uncertainty surrounding what had hitherto been a self-assured racial and national unassailability, symbolised by The Moonstone's Ezra Jennings' consumption of opium which went from "use to abuse". While Linton does not engage either with the public debate surrounding the use of opium, or suggest criminality in any form, her use of the term "druggist" subsequently picked up by her reviewers, does perhaps suggest a sinister undertone to Crawford's profession.¹³⁶ Just as there is a mystery in the circumstances of Crawford's personal life there is the hint that in his professional life too there may be something that should also be obscured, Linton's description of Crawford's shop-front serving as a, perhaps unwitting, metaphor for the man himself.

It was a rather severe looking place – more like a dispensary than a chemist's shop. The lower panes of the window were darkened, and there was none of the ordinary frivolities on sale here. 'Leslie Crawford' was in small black letters over the window.

Rebel p.129.

¹³⁴ David Faulkner, "The Confidence Man: Empire and the Deconstruction of Muscular Christianity in The Mystery of Edwin Drood," in Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age, Donald E. Hall (ed.) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1994. p. 179.

¹³⁵ There is evidence to suggest that the public perception of the image of the opium den, such as Dickens presents in Edwin Drood, and which he claims to have drawn from personal knowledge, via an investigative visit to such an establishment, was in fact largely created by his own representation that subsequently informed later descriptions. See Victoria Berridge & Griffith Edwards, Opium and the People: Opiate Use and Drug Control Policy in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century England, Free Association Books, London. 1999.

¹³⁶ See Julian North, "The Opium-eater as criminal in Victorian writing" in Writing and Victorianism, J.B. Bullen (ed) Longman, London. 1997. pp. 120-136.

Ostensibly Linton is emphasising the seriousness of Crawford's character, demonstrating his businesslike professionalism and his discerning and unostentatious disposition, but contained within the description is the suggestion that behind the plain and apparently unembellished facade there lies, in those darkened lower regions, a concealed secret that remains obscured from the outside world, a duality already indicated by his twinned occupation. Further, like the drugs he can be assumed to dispense, Crawford, as demonstrated by his influence over Perdita, also has the power to subdue. It has been shown that Linton maintained a deep suspicion of the power of the unconscious mind, misgivings that reveal themselves in her characterisation of Crawford. Nor was she alone in her anxiety, in the capability for manipulating science for good or evil, altruism or self-interest, Linton is foreshadowing the doubling of the dual personality of Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) with its underlying suggestion that evil is potentially more powerful than good. Whilst in Rebel Linton does not go as far as Stevenson in exploring the darker side of human nature, nevertheless there are intimations that despite her faith in science she was aware of its latent destructive capacity, should its power fall into the "wrong" hands. Scientific authority, like religious authority, plainly carries with it the potential for social destruction and those to whom scientific authority is devolved must be worthy of the investment.

Perdita's salvation and Hermione's downfall are rooted in the choices they make in regard to whose authority they are willing to acknowledge. Perdita defers to husband, science and rationalism while Hermione chooses priest, religion and superstition. It is not enough that women should submit, they should be seen to submit to the proper authority, to reject the pressures of outside influence that lead them away from the sanctuary of domestic protection, and to place their faith in their husband's capacity to defend them against the corruption of external forces to which their innate weakness makes them predisposed.

Central to Under Which Lord? is the suggestion that the failure of the Fullerton marriage is rooted in the wife's denial that her husband's knowledge is superior and in her refusal to acquiesce to his commitment to the truth of science rather than the

deception of religious myth. The dispute in Under Which Lord? regarding with whom authority should lie, the duplicitous priest or the scientific husband, not only characterises individual domestic conflict but also a wider encounter between constituent parts of English society. Lascelles and Fullerton stand respectively as representatives of religion and the superstitious past, and a future predicated on the empirical truth of science and knowledge. In spite of Linton's nostalgia for earlier times when the nation's womanhood was exemplified by the "brown haired girl of the past" her sights remained firmly set on a progressing, evolving, scientific future.¹³⁷

Even though it is Fullerton who asserts that the priesthood is "the consecrated enemy to truth and freedom; the barrier *ex officio* to progress" the sentiments are explicitly Linton's own. His dismissal of the scriptures as merely "a collection of old-world fables, current at a time when science was nowhere, when the laws of evidence were not understood, and men were so ignorant that they could be made to believe [in] trumped up miracles" echoes her 1861 preface to Witch Stories, and prefigures its 1883 sequel.¹³⁸ Though it was not only in her fiction that Linton's pursuit of 'truth' and her concomitant faith in science (and her occasionally overstated admiration for scientists) as its means of revelation, manifested itself. An article in the Fortnightly Review, "Pasteur's Life and Labours", published in the summer of 1885 set into action a chain of response that, though now largely forgotten, establishes Linton's significance beyond that of anti-feminist proselytiser or "popular novelist" and validates her position as an authentic spokesperson on other important issues of intellectual and moral concern.¹³⁹

Following a familiar pattern, in "Pasteur's Life and Labours" Linton advocates science, through the pioneering work of Louis Pasteur, as the agency by which both physical and moral progress must be achieved. Asserting that the world owes as much to Pasteur for his discovery of the "infinitely little" as it does to Darwin for the "grand truth of evolution" she invests in Pasteur's discoveries the means of ameliorating the human condition. She believes that his advances in immunology not only pave the way for

¹³⁷ "The Girl of the Period" p. 339.

¹³⁸ Under Which Lord? I. pp. 80-81.

¹³⁹ Linton, "Pasteur's Life and Labours" Fortnightly Review, Vol. 38. August 1885. pp. 176-192. Linton is reviewing Louis Pasteur, His Life and Labours, by his son-in law Rene Vallery-Radot, translated from the French by Lady Claud Hamilton, with an introduction by Professor Tyndall. Longman, London. 1885.

immeasurable improvements to mankind's quality of life, but also represent a further step toward that greatest of objectives, the realisation of truth. Pasteur's findings leave a great legacy by which there may be "an incalculable saving of property, mitigation of suffering and prolongation of life, not to speak of the priceless possession of truth".¹⁴⁰ The article concludes with an unequivocal affirmation of science over theism.

When we weary of the sterile things of the world, we have always the rich and fertile fields of science for our rest and refreshment. When we are harassed and disturbed, perplexed and dismayed by the multiplicity of groundless faiths and baseless beliefs pressed on our acceptance, we have always facts such as Pasteur has proved to make us feel once more on solid ground where what is – is- and where that phantasmal disarray set forth by the lovers and makers of miracles has no place.¹⁴¹

However, the article did differ from the conventional in two significant respects; it was signed with her full name so the article's authorship was known, and it attracted the attention of one of the most eminent of eminent Victorians, William Gladstone.

Linton's early National Magazine contributions were signed with her initials, thus ensuring that while not exactly anonymous the gender of the writer remained undefined. Given their subject matter and the adoption of an authoritative and didactic tone, the mid-nineteenth century reader would have little reason to suppose that these articles would be anything other than written by a man. Linton encouraged this impression by suggesting an active participation in scientific proceedings, "the writer of this paper was witness to certain experiments".¹⁴² Indeed, if they were to be taken seriously it was necessary that the reader believed the author to be male. That it was men who embodied scientific achievement, and that it was through the male voice that knowledge was disseminated, was axiomatic. Unlike her National Magazine articles the signature E. Lynn Linton was appended to the later "Pasteur's Life and Labours" and, given her reputation, there could be few Fortnightly Review readers who remained unaware of Linton's sex. That she could publish an article that freely discussed learned scientific issues under her own name is not only indicative of the waning custom of anonymous

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 176, 191.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 192.

¹⁴² "The Air of Towns" p. 293.

publication but also demonstrates that within intellectual company hers was a name that commanded respect.

VIII. A Protest and a Plea: Science, Agnosticism and the Quest for Truth.

In "Pasteur's Life and Labours" Linton refers to Darwin's "grand truth of evolution", and it was this reference that drew the attention and the enmity of Gladstone, who in an article of his own, "The Dawn of Creation and of Worship" took Linton to task. He alludes to her as an example of a well-known writer of high moral principle and literary ability who nevertheless, willingly, without an apparent thought to the consequences, or he implied, without the mandatory shame that should accompany such a conclusion, rejects religious belief. In addition he offends her and by association her scientific hero, by suggesting that her own advocacy of evolutionary theory, "as recently developed by Mr. Darwin" is a "novelty" and that science is an insubstantial and empty substitute for religious faith, a "flimsy and hollow" replacement for "what is brightest and best in the inheritance of man".¹⁴³ Given Linton's already demonstrated antipathy toward what she perceived as fads of any kind, even quasi-scientific ones, she would have been especially affronted by the proposition that her sponsorship of evolutionary theory was impulsive or transitory. In addition, Gladstone's dismissive phrase, "as recently developed by Mr. Darwin" carries with it the suggestion that Darwin came to his deduction hastily and without due reflection, an impression that is then reinforced by placing the word "novelty" in the same sentence; thus casting doubt on the veracity of all that Linton held dear, including the reputation of Darwin himself.

Gladstone's article was not written as a reaction to "Pasteur's Life" *per se*, his remarks formed part of an essay written in response to the publication of an English translation of the French Protestant theologian Albert Réville's antagonistic Prolégomènes de

¹⁴³ William Gladstone, "The Dawn of Creation and of Worship" in Hon. W E Gladstone, Prof. T H Huxley, Prof. Max Müller, M. Réville and E Lynn Linton, The Order of Creation: The Conflict between Genesis and Geology, The Truthseeker Co., New York, 1886. pp. 41-42. Gladstone's article was first published in the Nineteenth Century in Nov. 1885, during the short period between his second and third ministries. (Freidrich) Max Müller (1823-1900) German philologist, Oxford Prof. Modern Languages, 1854 and Comparative Philology, 1868.

l'histoire des religions (1884).¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless Linton was prompted to answer his accusations, which she did in an essay "A Protest and a Plea", this, together with several others also responding to Gladstone's article were then published in a single volume as The Order of Creation: The Conflict between Genesis and Geology (1886) The section in Gladstone's article to which Linton took most exception is quoted verbatim in her response. While acknowledging the honour that he does her by alluding to her at all, she robustly objects to his surprise:

not only at the fact, but at the manner in which in this day, writers, whose name is legion, unimpeached in character and abounding in talent, not only put away from them, cast into shadow or the very gulf of negation itself, the conception of a deity, an acting and ruling deity. Of this belief, which has satisfied the doubts, and wiped away the tears, and found guidance for the footsteps of so many a weary wanderer on earth, which among the best and greatest of our race has been so cherished by those who had it, and so longed and sought for by those who had it not, we might suppose that if at length we had discovered that it was in the light of truth untenable, that the accumulated testimony of man was worthless, and that his wisdom was but folly, yet at least the decencies of mourning would be vouchsafed to this irreparable loss. Instead of this, it is with *a joy and exultation that might almost recall the frantic orgies of the Commune* that this, at least at first sight, terrific and overwhelming calamity is accepted and recorded as a gain.¹⁴⁵ (The italics are Linton's)

Linton's foremost objections were to Gladstone's suggestion that her stance was not a measured and logical conclusion reached after reasoned deliberation but the result of illogical speculation. As has already been demonstrated, her agnostic conclusions had been reached only after much serious and grave reflection, nor was her loss of faith a "terrific and overwhelming calamity"; rather, she welcomed the sense of release that her antitheist conclusion brought her. Moreover, as Joshua Davidson illustrates, while Linton was well disposed to the egalitarian principles of the Commune she would have been deeply offended by Gladstone's implication (almost certainly unconscious and unintended) that she was displaying an un-English lack of self-restraint.

¹⁴⁴ Dr. Albert Réville, Prolegomena to the History of Religions (trans. Squire) Williams & Norgate, London. 1884.

¹⁴⁵ Linton, "A Protest and a Plea" pp. 161-162 quoting from Gladstone, "The Dawn of Creation and of Worship" The Order of Creation. p. 40. See appendix IV. for the full text of "A Protest and a Plea".

Speaking not only for herself but also on behalf of fellow agnostics she assures Gladstone that regardless of what he may think, agnosticism is not a conviction of which the holder should be ashamed, and she seeks to reassure him that a rejection of religious dogma is not synonymous with a rejection of moral values. Indeed she takes the opportunity to reiterate the principle of agnosticism as a genuinely held belief as deserving of respect as any other, one moreover that she considers to be of superior moral standard to that of conventional religious belief. She also took the occasion to restate her confidence in science to dispel the superstitious myth of religion and to carry mankind forward, via verifiable truths, into a better, more honest and forthright future.

If we think that such religions as the world has hitherto seen have been subjective and not given from without – self-generated and not self-revealed – it is not because we are indifferent to the religious idea, not because we want to get rid of a restraining moral influence, nor yet because we despise the consolations of faith and the peace which follows prayer. It is simply because certain things integral to those revelations, cannot stand the test of scientific truth and fall to pieces under the touch of reason. ... There is no more sin in questioning the objective truth of religious systems than there is in verifying a scientific position. We seek the truth, and the fact of this seeking is the proof that we have not yet found. ... Meanwhile, we who believe in the future of humanity by the law of progress wait, hoping and of good heart. Schools are our temples; science is our ritual; time is our heaven; the human race contains our future gods; and the Satan we have to conquer and to chain is that arid Egotism which despises for the race what it cannot enjoy in its own person, and cares more for the salvation of its own individuality than it does for the redemption of the world. If in this creed can be found any analogy to the frantic orgies of the Commune, I for one am content to stand in the pillory and let Mr. Gladstone and his co-religionists pelt me at their pleasure.¹⁴⁶

However, even while protesting that Gladstone's allegations were "cruel, misdirecting, unjust", Linton appears constrained to validate her prerogative to respond. Her claim that her protest was "founded on a much smaller point" than Huxley's scientific, or Müller's classicist and etymological arguments, even though it was one "on which [I] am entitled to speak" sanctions her right to voice her opinions while simultaneously deprecating the significance of what she says.¹⁴⁷ The vigour with which she reacts clearly demonstrates the strength of her feelings, yet she seems compelled to justify and apparently disparage her objection to Gladstone's indictment as less important or

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. pp. 162-163, 177-178.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 161, 162. The defence of evolutionary theory was left to her co-contributors.

inferior to the others contained in the collection. It is possible of course that the then illustrious company of her fellow contributors may have overawed her (she would certainly have been proud to be included in such a distinguished list). However it is more likely that her reticence was a product of the hegemony that subjugated women's knowledge and confined women's voices to certain well-defined areas, areas in which science was not generally included. Even while Linton was speaking on behalf of fellow agnostics she emphasises that she is replying as an individual, offering a personal response, as opposed to the other contributors to the collection who are offering the combined views of the scientific establishment; this is made particularly clear by her stress on the personal pronoun, "I for one" in her closing statement. These crucial oppositions plainly reflect not only the tensions between religion and science but also can be seen as Linton's attempt to anticipate the possibility of a challenge concerning her fundamental right to speak on the issue at all.

In distancing herself from the collective company of her fellow contributors Linton is not only stressing the personal, rather than representative nature of her protest but also can be seen to be indicating that that she would not be so presumptive as to include herself in their illustrious number. In addition, the location of Linton's essay as the final one in the collection also serves to set her apart from her co-contributors. By placing her contribution last the editorial implication might be understood to be that her essay serves as an after-word, a supplemental addendum rather than a principal component of the corpus of intellectual opinion, thus re enforcing the marginality of women's voices (even those as strident as Linton's) in intellectual, particularly scientific, debate.

Hitherto, "A Protest and a Plea" has attracted very little attention, perhaps because it has been perceived principally as an anti-religious text; indeed what little attention it has drawn has considered it almost entirely as an agnostic document. Linton was well known for her scepticism and though Nancy Anderson briefly notes that the essay was an affirmation of Linton's "positivist belief in objective scientific law, free from the partialities of revealed religion" it is perhaps understandable that Linton's generally less overt pro-science stance has been interpreted as deriving from her anti-theism rather than as a complementary, though not dependent, intellectual and philosophical

conclusion.¹⁴⁸ Anderson, like Vineta Colby, highlights Linton's defence of the agnostic as the guardian of "the lapsed creed of universality" and one who "preaches afresh the democracy of souls" but these analyses do not extend beyond this point.¹⁴⁹ Rather more surprising, given the elevated company of her fellow essayists, is that there is not even a passing mention of the document in the biographies of either George Somes Layard or Herbert van Thal.

"A Protest and a Plea" is an eloquent and sincere affirmation of Linton's agnosticism, but it is more than that; it is also a clear statement of her faith in science as the means by which the advance of human civilization will reach its zenith. Its inclusion in The Order of Creation signifies its importance, not only as a declaration of self-assurance but also as a powerful (and like her letter to Huxley, symbolically neglected) testimony to the questioning spirit of the age. Quite apart from the moral and literary recognition acknowledged in Gladstone's preliminary statement, Linton's participation in what the subtitle of the collection terms "a controversy" between disputants of such reputation and eminence is indicative of her significance beyond that of anti-feminist didact.

As Linton's letter to Thomas Huxley demonstrates, despite the rigorousness with which she pursued her own self-education Linton always regretted that she received no formal teaching, the lack of which she felt deprived her not only of knowledge *per se* but perhaps as importantly, from access to the individuals and institutions through whom knowledge was disseminated. In a letter to Herbert Spencer, written two decades after that to Huxley, and at a time when she was actively opposing the entrance of women into higher education, she lamented that her own "admiration for a philosophic mind" was:

in proportion to my own want of philosophy, to my own deficiency all round in the way of education. ...I have *always* been among conventional or unlearned people, I have never been in the higher circles of thought and knowledge.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Anderson, Woman against Women, p. 189.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p.137. Colby, pp. 37-38. "A Protest and a Plea" p. 171.

¹⁵⁰ Layard, p. 204. emphasis in original. Although Layard does not give an exact date for the letter he places it as the late 1880s.

She was perhaps being somewhat disingenuous given the extent of her acquaintance with many of the foremost intellects of the age; nevertheless her claim highlights the obstacles that she felt she encountered as a woman functioning in a man's world.¹⁵¹

Unlike her letter to Huxley this correspondence with Spencer reflects on the personal consequences of what Linton identified as the shortcomings of her own education, rather than on the costs to women as a whole of their restricted access to the means of higher education. This letter also notes the difficulty, which Linton felt keenly and to which she had referred in the Huxley letter, that even if it were possible to make their acquaintance, of engaging scientific men in serious and meaningful conversation.

Linton's experience of meeting the celebrated Dr. Whewell, and his arbitrary dismissal of her deeply felt concerns, no doubt remained in her mind. However, difficulties of access notwithstanding, her conviction that scientific knowledge and application was crucial to social advance remained uncompromising. The application of reason aside, the intense curiosity and the quest for knowledge and for "truth" that drove the young Eliza Lynn's self-education would itself direct her toward science and away from religion. The nature of science encourages inquiry whereas religious belief resists interrogation, explicitly requiring faith without proof, something with which Linton could not be reconciled.

Moreover, knowledge in itself was not enough; as she explained to A.W. Benn, she felt that the methodical and systematic rigours necessary to scientific research were essential elements in the journey toward human enlightenment.

The more I see, the more I feel the need for scientific training for common sense even in life. ... Scientific training and being accustomed to look for causes for results and means for attaining ends is the only true enlightener – the only solid basis for the pyramid of life.¹⁵²

In Kirkland she ascribes what she identifies as her own, "persistent intellectual deficiencies – my want of dialectical skill, my want of scientific accuracy", to her lack of formal education. "Essentially self-educated as I am, that self-education began at an age when the elemental drudgery, which always seems useless to ignorance, is naturally

¹⁵¹ As the, albeit estranged, wife of the radical republican W. J. Linton her declaration to have "*always* been among the conventional" was also somewhat ambiguous.

¹⁵² Linton to A. W. Benn, 1881, Layard, p. 203.

shirked for the more interesting results". Never having been "subjected to that severe mental discipline which is but another form of moral control, I grew up in absolute mental unrestraint", a condition that she felt she was never able to fully overcome.¹⁵³ It should of course be borne in mind that in Kirkland Linton represents herself as a male, for whom, had there been the parental will such an education would have been possible. But, as Anderson points out, the standard curriculum for middle-class girls was engaged in "training girls in the arts of ladyhood", not in the rigours of intellectual inquiry, and had Linton received conventional instruction her education would in fact have "suffered grievously".¹⁵⁴

Robert Wolff is dismissive of Linton's "undiscriminating enthusiasm" for science, he suspects that "she probably read little and understood less of the original works of the leading scientists" and that she welcomed their impact on society "chiefly because it reinforced her own already heterodox religious opinions".¹⁵⁵ However, while Linton was by no means a science scholar, Wolff's allegation does not hold up against the wealth of evidence that signals her engagement with the implications of scientific theory and the application of scientific knowledge, not to mention the thirst for knowledge that stayed with her all her life. Although she may not have been a scientist, and undoubtedly her comprehension was not as extensive as she would have wished, her knowledge was certainly no less than that of the majority of her reasonably well educated and relatively intelligent contemporaries, and as such she is undeserving of Wolff's somewhat brusque dismissal.

In addition, despite Wolff's claim, while Linton's enthusiasm for science is beyond dispute it was by no means indiscriminating. As has already been seen, Kirkland, and other works, provide evidence that despite her profound admiration for Lyell and for Chambers she was conscious that their work was often flawed, Chambers' work in particular was unsound. Nevertheless she was aware that in the continuum of scientific

¹⁵³ Kirkland I. pp. 71-73.

¹⁵⁴ Anderson, Woman against Women, p. 23. Anderson records a piece in the Examiner as mocking Linton's ostentatious displays of self-acquired knowledge. "At present a sort of astonishment is often manifested by Mrs. Lynn Linton at her own profound acquirements. It is so strange a feeling it must be imparted to others in season and out of season". (May 27, 1876. p. 597) p. 22.

¹⁵⁵ Wolff, pp. 418-419.

knowledge their contribution was invaluable. As she had noted in "The Unities of Nature", "nothing belonging to us rose up full grown", and in a Fortnightly Review article written at the suggestion of Herbert Spencer, she reiterates the same point, noting that pioneer scientists, "groping and in the dark...marksmen aiming well but never hitting the true goal...showed at least the direction to be taken". But Professor Drummond's The Ascent of Man (1894) drawing on the work of these pioneer marksmen, without attribution, instigated what Layard described as a "new departure in polemics" and which amply demonstrates that Linton's regard for science, or scientists, was not indiscriminate.¹⁵⁶ Drummond's book had raised the ire of Spencer who regarded it as a plagiarism of his own theories as expounded in Social Statics (1850) and Data of Ethics (1879) and adapted into "semi-scientific sentimentalities".¹⁵⁷ Linton, encouraged by Spencer, agreed to "tweak the nose" of Drummond, resulting in a condemnation which in fact went far beyond the "tweaking" that Spencer had envisaged, developing into a "scathing indictment of that modern order of writers which takes its science at second-hand, adulterates it with any quantity of sentimentality, and serves it up as a toothsome dish of newly discovered ingredients".¹⁵⁸

Embedded in her biting attack on Drummond's work is an apotheosis of Linton's advocacy of science over religion and her concomitant conviction that just as agnosticism was an exceptional attitude, the consequence of advanced levels of intellect and logic, so only the equally exceptional can truly understand the implications of scientific theory. Professor Drummond's "Discovery" she implies, was little better than the quasi-scientific, semi-religious supernatural fads that she continued to denounce as superstitious myth. Drummond had, she claimed, caught the taste of the "uncritical and scientifically uneducated public", whose willingness "to swallow any form of quackery while neglecting truer and better-grounded expositions" made her despair.

The greedy haste to swallow any form of quackery...the curious pleasure taken in mysticism and sentimentality, and the no less curious aversion from the calm distinctness of science...all point to a state of mental confusion which argues ill

¹⁵⁶ Linton, "Professor Henry Drummond's Discovery" Fortnightly Review, Sept. 1894, p. 448. Layard, p. 310. Layard's statement, together with his apparently having no knowledge of "A Protest and a Plea" suggests that his knowledge of his subject was not comprehensive.

¹⁵⁷ Layard, p. 310. Mr. Herbert Spencer to Linton, Sept. 3 1894, Layard, p. 312.

¹⁵⁸ Mr. Herbert Spencer to Linton, June 6 1894, Layard, p. 310.

for the future and which certainly proves the present to be unsatisfactory. There is nothing which average people dislike more than precision of thought, the logical genesis of opinion, the root-work of a creed; nothing that delights them so much as picturesqueness of statement irrespective of its truth – as sentimentality irreducible by logic or reason to anything resembling common sense. And, as the exponent of that form of pseudo-science which puts old wine into new bottles,...Professor Drummond fulfils all these conditions and supplies all the ingredients in profusion. Hence his popularity. He brings his subject, which only the educated can rightly understand, down to the level of the ignorant. He strips science of her divinity and sends her out as a cottage-maid,...he [endeavours] to extract milk for babes out of meat for men; and his rendering of synthetic philosophy is both inadequate and shallow.¹⁵⁹

Popular science, like popular religion appealed to the “weaker brethren” who knew no better. Linton’s reference to science as a “divinity” clearly indicates her faith in science to dispel and replace esoteric religious belief with tangible knowledge. Science as “meat for men” shows Linton’s conviction that the manliness of agnosticism was matched by the manliness of science, although in referring to “her divinity” Linton is suggesting that science is a goddess, rather than a god.

Eliza Lynn Linton was a wholehearted enthusiast for all forms of scientific research, the processes of science fascinated her, she approved the intellectual and philosophic achievements of scientists and she identified scientific progress as the means of realising an ideal society. However, unlike her opposition to women’s rights, or even her religious iconoclasm, her fervour for all things scientific remained rather more oblique. Ironically, one of the reasons she was not so strident about her commitment to science was that to be so would be to cross those same boundaries between the domestic and the public sphere which she herself so robustly upheld. She vigorously defended her role as a “woman against women” by arguing that as a woman she had a right, and as a journalist a duty, to prescribe female behaviour, but she could not claim the same privilege where science was concerned. In sponsoring a positive social role for science, writing about scientific subjects and extolling science as the empirical force that would propel humanity out of a past dominated by superstitious myth into a future illuminated by scientific truth Linton was situating herself in a realm that actively promoted female exclusion. Yet she successfully fashioned a role for herself as a propagandist for science

¹⁵⁹ “Professor Henry Drummond’s Discovery,” p. 457.

that conformed to society's notion of correct female positioning, effectively negotiating a sometimes-tortuous path between concepts of the proper without drawing the opprobrium that much of her other work attracted

Extreme or over-stated as many of her opinions may seem to us now, through her fiction and her journalism she both articulated and manipulated public opinion. As previous critics have noted, she had "her finger on the pulse" on many of the issues that exercised the minds of the Victorian middle-classes and through her writing can be traced the social and political concerns experienced by her contemporaries. Just as the twin issues of science and religion were conjoined in public controversy and private speculation so Linton's texts explore the challenges that scientific advances were offering to religious certainty; often articulating the contradictions and ambiguities that assailed public and private conscience. Analysis of her treatment of scientific subjects, her discourse on the implications of scientific theory and fact, and her confidence that science would continue to disclose literal and empirical truth reveals that Linton offers an authentic and hitherto overlooked channel of admission into the intellectual and emotional challenges that confronted nineteenth century society.

Conclusion

As a woman writer whose novels and journalism were for the most part predicated on women's position in society; as the creator of 'The Girl of the Period' and her mature incarnation the "Wild Woman" and as an independent woman seemingly opposed to women's independence, it is inevitable that Linton should draw the attention of feminist critics and be the subject of criticism from a feminist standpoint. She has, until recently, been largely disregarded by other critical disciplines and perspectives, so much so that current observers could be forgiven for concluding that the nature and role of women in Victorian society was Linton's sole preoccupation. This is not to say that Linton's positioning on the "woman question" is not important, it inevitably impacts on all of her work and as such her writing enriches and deepens our own understanding of gender in Victorian society. However, because most of the research that has been undertaken on Linton has focussed primarily on her anti-feminism, it has hitherto also served to conceal her significance with reference to other, equally crucial areas of social concern, central to which are the doubts and anxieties generated by changing models of religious belief and scientific advance.

I began this thesis by discussing the diversity of meaning encompassed by the adjective "Victorian" and the multiplicity of explicit, and concealed, associations that the term suggests. Amongst which can be included a conception of "high-minded" and worthy literature that provides a large, possibly disproportionate number of canonical texts. The benchmark of pre-eminent literature, worthy of consideration for the canon, is that it goes beyond the society in which it is located, stepping out of time and place to become universal and omnipresent. Linton however, did not write not for the future, but for the moment, neither did she claim to address everyman. While the issues that she confronted inevitably impacted on all areas of society her claim to belong to the "bread-winning class" aligns her firmly with the middle-classes and she rarely strayed out of the rank into which she had been born, and for whom she reserved her bitterest criticism.

As an independent self-supporting career woman, the first woman journalist in England to draw a fixed salary, she was nevertheless a firm advocate of the separate spheres that kept women's role confined to the domestic. Regardless of her advocacy of communism she was never a sponsor of a classless society, her egalitarianism extended only to the conviction that each section of society should acknowledge its responsibility and its commitment to every other, arguing not that the principle of servant and master was mistaken, but that one should be kind to one's employees. While volubly denying religious authority as a means of social control she nevertheless continued to uphold and promote the church as an agency of necessary social restraint. A republican, a Darwinian agnostic and strong advocate of all things pertaining to science, Linton nonetheless obdurately continued to endorse many of the conservative traditions of the early years of the century when even the most conventional institutions had accepted change as inevitable, her principles remaining firmly rooted in middle-class notions of decency, duty, obligation and perceptions of the proper. This is not to say that Linton, in an evocation of yet another "Victorian" designation, can be accused of hypocrisy. Rather, in her often contradictory positioning she mirrors the often equally contradictory impulses and attitudes of a society for whom, and about whom, she wrote.

In her letter to Huxley, Linton declared herself to be a "representative woman of the bread-winning class" and while she may have been assuming a level of self-effacement she did not in truth feel, in a sense she was right to make this claim. It is in her "representativeness" that her importance as a literary and historical figure lies, though this is not to suggest that Linton was by any means average or ordinary. Eliza Linton was a clever woman with philosophic inclinations, but she was neither an accomplished storyteller nor an intellectual in the sense of her rival George Eliot; her work was not of high philosophical or outstanding literary merit and she was not, in the strict sense, a sage. She was however a writer who successfully engaged with the pressing social and cultural issues of the day. As has already been noted, "of all the subjects that interested Victorians...not love, or crime, or war, or sport, or ancestry, or even money – held their attention as much as religion"¹ and in her exploration of models of belief, her advocacy of the integrity of agnosticism and her concomitant sponsorship of science over religion,

¹ Wolff, pp. 1-2.

Linton was both playing out and giving voice to many of the anxieties experienced by her contemporaries.

Her work has vigour and an immediacy that captures the attention and a robust style and facility for the epigrammatic phrase that makes much of her work an appealing read even if one does not concur with the sentiments expressed. While it has to be admitted that it was in journalism that her greatest skill lay, Vineta Colby's assertion that Linton's novels "can be read today only with clinical curiosity to see how she managed to capture a public in spite of a conspicuous lack of creative ability" does not do justice to a writer whose work, by Colby's own admission, confronted "every major challenge of her day".²

The fact is that Linton "captured" her public because she captured their concerns. Embedded in the melodrama of her fiction and the polemics of her journalism, her often-unsympathetic characters and her frequently improbable plots, she encapsulated and articulated the deep-seated unease of a society undergoing fundamental change. While it must be granted that late on in her career the severity of her denunciation of the new woman overshadowed her more measured responses to other cultural concerns, rendering her views on women anachronistic and serving to diminish the credence given to her opinion in other areas, she nevertheless offers, both through her writing and the circumstances of her life, a multiplicity of points of access to those stresses that shifting cultural insecurity was imposing on the society to whom her work was addressed.

This thesis reveals Eliza Lynn Linton as an infinitely more complex and multi-faceted figure than has hitherto been acknowledged. Its locating of Linton within a wider historical and literary framework than that which she has hitherto been allowed serves to reveal her centrality to the issues of the Victorian age. Its exploration of Linton's treatment of religion and science and how gender impacts upon them, and the strategies that Linton utilised in order to engage with areas of debate from which her sex should have excluded her, offers valuable new insights into Victorian women's writing. In

² Colby. p. 36, 38.

addition, its recovery of Linton's letter to Huxley represents a significant contribution to the record of women in nineteenth century science.

No one person, no matter how "representative", can symbolize even a single section of society or a single moment in time; let alone such a large part of such a diverse society, or so long a period as that covered by the career of Eliza Lynn Linton. Nevertheless, as this study reveals, through the working out of the tensions between religious and secular society, her advocacy of science, and her encouragement of the philosophical questioning of the whole nature of belief, privileging intellect and reason over intuition and sentiment, Eliza Lynn Linton offers a significant means of access into the complexities of the Victorian psyche and through hitherto concealed gateways into the contradictory landscape of the Victorian world.

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The True Story of Joshua Davidson: Christian and Communist. pp.30-36.

The night before we left for London Joshua had a kind of vision or waking dream, which he told me as we were on our way to Launceston, walking up the hill from Boscastle, while the omnibus toiled after us. He was on the cliff by Long Island, when suddenly he seemed to be caught away to a wide plain, where many men were gathered. In the centre of the plain was a hill, like Brown Willy out there by Camelford, and on this hill sat two kingly figures who ruled over the swarming multitudes below. They sat together hand in hand, and he saw that they were in some mysterious way inseparable. The one was dressed as a high priest, and was Ecclesiastical Christianity; the other as a king, and was Society; and both were stern, forbidding and oppressive. The only persons to whom they showed favour were the well-dressed and the subservient – rich people dressed in gold and jewels, and the poor and undistinguished who were submissive and conforming; who accepted all that the high priest taught without questioning the truth of any part, and who obeyed what the king ordained without even so much as a wish to resist. These were called Believing Christians and Respectable Members of Society; and, in consideration of their obedience, both the high priest and the king smiled on them, and spoke them fair. Yet they were scarcely friendly to their adherents. The one surrounded them with the most monstrous shapes of demons cast by magic lanterns and in every way unreal, of which they were in continual fear – GOD, whom yet they labelled “Our Father” and the “God of Love,” the most terrible looking demon of all, and the more they were afraid, and the more cruel they believed Our Father to be, the more Ecclesiastical Christianity was content. The other bound them round and round with chains and swathing bands, till they were scarcely able to move or breathe. And when they submitted to the stifling torture with a good grace – some of them even drawing the links tighter, and buckling up the thongs more home of their own accord, and all declaring the pattern of each particular bandage to have been sent down direct from heaven, and in no wise invented as an experiment by Society – the king smiled on them with many flattering words; and the poor atrophied wretches were quite content with the barren honour of their reward.

At the feet of these two rulers lay three figures cruelly bound and tortured. They were Truth, bearing in her arms her young child Science, Freedom, and Humanity. All three were stretched on racks made in the form of a cross, which gave in the eyes of the multitude a kind of symbolic sanction to their torture. The two rulers were forever trying to gag them, so that they should not speak; but they could not quite succeed; and every now and then they uttered words, loud and clear as the sound of a silver trumpet, that stirred the multitude below, and set men running hither and thither, some shaking themselves free of the bonds in which both Christianity and Society had bound them. And when they spoke, the high priest and the king and their worshippers, all the well dressed little kings and poorer conformists, buffeted them; and would have killed them if they could.

Ill-treated as they were, however, each tortured being had a small knot of adherents. Round Truth, bearing her young child, Science, gathered men of imposing aspect – men of authority, of large brains, of temperate nature, of clear and candid thought. There were some among them of such unquestionable grandeur, that even the mob of Believing Christians and Respectable Members of Society paid them a certain cold, deprecatory reverence as they passed; while Ecclesiastical Christianity tried to reconcile their statements with his own creed, hiding his magic lantern painted with demons and that all-devouring hell with which he terrified the multitudes when he spoke to them; saying, “See, there is no difference between us after all! I do not contradict you. Say what you will about the sun, and the age of the earth, the relations of the universe, and the gradual evolution of man, nothing that you advance disturbs me I only supplement you, and add the divine grace of spiritual truth, which is beyond your analysis. You are right and I am right; let us be friends and brothers.”

Society was less concerned about these philosophers. They were for the most part swathed in *his* bands tight enough; some for pre-occupation with other matters, some for dread of the unknown, and some for conviction; and, for the rest, he let his twin-brother, the high priest, fight his battles as he best could.

Round the prostrate form of Freedom, scarred, gashed, bleeding, fettered, stood only a few. Even the men of science were afraid of this huge giant, this son of the old gods, whose might no one had been able to calculate should he once arise in his strength. All, save his own few lovers, chiefly of the poorest class, looked on him with dread, and prophesied evil days for the world should he ever get free of his bonds and the symbolic constraint of the cross. But his small band of lovers, themselves either martyrs or victims, worked incessantly at his deliverance; every now and then getting one link loosened here and another there, knowing that in time he would with their help shake himself free of all his chains, and stand up before the world, the great-hearted leader, the glad possession of every man and woman that breathes.

The third figure was the most deeply oppressed. The face was hidden, but it was a lovely form, vilely clad in disfiguring garments, and bespattered with dirt that had been flung at it by the high priest and Society in concert. On its nailed hands hung the weeping and the miserable; and no one was rejected or bidden back. The most miserable sinner that crawled – the thief, the murderer, the harlot – it gathered them all around it; its own bound hands doing their checked best to free them from their strains. Pleasure and pain and sin and virtue all rested equally on its large breast, and to all it gave full sympathy and understanding. It condemned no one; only it refused obedience to the high priest and the king. As the dreamer looked, it slowly turned its face to the sky; and Joshua recognised in the soiled and vilified face of Humanity – the face of Christ.

Suddenly standing side by side with the magnificently attired pontiff, this Ecclesiastical Christianity, oppressor of Truth, slanderer of Humanity, tyrant of Freedom, ruler of the Churches, and through them the of the consciences of men; side by side, too, with his twin-brother Society, his fellow-tyrant and oppressor, was a man coarsely clad in rude garments, a man of uncultured speech, of unconventional manners, but of noble aspect, whose face was the face of an enthusiast who believed in himself, and in whose self-reliance were his sole credentials. His companions were the same as those who had gathered round the crucified form of Humanity. All the poor and the miserable, the leprous, the sinners, the outcast, and those “sinless Cains” of history, those men who had lived to do good to their generation, and who had been stoned and crucified as their

reward – they had all clustered closely round him. He had nothing to do with that regal Society, that mitred Christianity. He loudly proclaimed his antagonism to both, and drew to him only such as they spurned and rejected.

He pointed to the high priest: “Look,” he said to Joshua, “what they have made of me; of an unskilled artisan, no schoolman even of his day, and a vagrant preacher living by charity, they have made a king; of a man, a god; of a preacher of universal tolerance, the head of a persecuting religion; of a life, a dogma; of an example, a Church. Here I am, Jesus the Nazarene, the son of Joseph and Mary, as I lived on earth; poor, unlearned, a plebeian, and a socialist, at war with the gentlemen and ladies of my society, the enemy of forms, of creeds, of the priestly class of respectabilities; and there you see my modern travesty, this jewelled, ornate, exclusive Ecclesiastical Christianity, who is the ancient Pharisee revived. To you, and such as you, is given the task of bringing men back to the creed that I preached. And if in securing the essence of the creed you forget the founder, and call my doctrine by another name than mine, so be it. The world wants the thing, not the label; and Christlikeness, not Ecclesiastical Christianity, is the best Saviour of men.”

As he said this the whole vision seemed to fade away, and the voice of Peggy Bray, whining and drunk, with Mr. Grand’s deep tones of angry disgust, broke the quiet evening stillness, and brought Joshua back to the realities of life.

The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland, Vol. III. pp. 158-161.

We abandon belief in the unchangeableness of law – which is masculine – in favour of the religious sentiment, shifting, personal, emotional, subject to the pressure of affection and the relief of compassion – which is feminine. The fundamental doctrines of Christianity; - seeking strength elsewhere than in our own resolve; humility before a dread power which accords favour and denies rights; holiness of life springing from love to or fear of God and in obedience to His command, and not because holiness is good in itself and needs no incentive of reward nor deterrent of punishment; the fear born of hell and the hope registered in heaven; Christ, the eternal Man-God, ever willing to save those who come to him; Mary the eternal Mother ever ready to comfort and intercede for those who pray to her; the saintly hierarchy doing their best for their brothers and sisters – all those heavenly advocates standing as merciful mediators between humanity and the Supreme God; the intense conviction of the personal importance of the individual; - these are essentially feminine; and the proof of sympathy is seen in the lines of attachment. It is woman who fills the churches; as how should it not be, seeing that Christianity idealizes her needs, her virtues, her sentiments? The virile strength of man has no favour where her timid plasticity has all. Where heathen ethics taught magnanimity, because of the noble pride which would not stoop to parallel lines of baseness, Christianity teaches forgiveness, because Christ forgave His enemies and died that sinners might be forgiven of God. Does not the whole world lie between these two limits? Surely! – the whole world of masculine self-control and feminine obedience; masculine reason and feminine emotion. Where heathen philosophy taught self-respect, and Buddhism makes a man's higher moral state dependant on his own will, Christianity sighs out the confession of sin, and trusts to a stronger Hand for help. Where heathendom formulated the great law of Necessity, encompassing and limiting the action of the gods themselves, Christianity confesses an Omnipotence which overloads us with misery here that we may be compensated hereafter, and patiently accepts sorrow *for the sake* of future glory, as a woman accepts the mysterious pain of maternity for the sake of the living joy to come. *Where heathendom*, manlike, credited

its gods with the lusty life of love, the pleasures of social intercourse and the varied delights of the senses, Christianity, as the chaster woman, ranks perpetual virginity as one of the supremest virtues, and makes all sensual enjoyment coincident with spiritual degradation. Where heathendom left Hades a land of shadows, and made the sorrow of life after death to consist in the bloodless strengthlessness of the spirits of brave men, neither alive nor yet dead, Christianity accepts, trembling the ghastly doctrine of eternal torture, to be avoided only through the mercy of the Saviour who gives by grace what cannot be wrung from power – just as the typical woman sues for mercy because she has not the courage to demand, nor the strength to obtain, justice. It is the same through all the clauses. And if not indirect injunction nor in distinct allowance, yet in spirit and sympathy, the apotheosis of woman began with Christianity, because therein are enshrined the special characteristics of her sex.

Eliza Lynn Linton to Thomas Henry Huxley, November 11 1868.

30 A, PETEROY STREET,
PETEROY SQUARE, W.

November 11. 1868.



Dear Sir / I trust you will not think me
 presumptuous in addressing you. I have
 spoken to you last night but was afraid
 you would think me forward; & besides I had
 no opportunity, without forwarding. I want
 to urge the claims of us women to be still ad-
 mitted to the meetings of the Ethnological
 Society. I grant that in the interests of
 science (paramount of every other considera-
 tion) there may be at times necessary
 discussions on special subjects w^{ch} w^d render
 our presence kindling or indelicate. But
 these occasions are rare; & as you know
 the papers beforehand we can always
 be got rid of by an intimation at the
 close of the previous lecture, by a note
 left with the porter, by private inform-
 tion to our friends. I grant too that
 there are certain good & wise men who
 to presence of women is annoying - & some
 because they are the conventional & look on

us as drawing. our divinity, not to be
held of in anything whatsoever of outside
life - even to where knowledge in women
is unfeminine, & scientific knowledge
especially so - to others because they are
typical & contemptuous & think us have
drawing from domestic incapability
education & unworthy various information,
Grant them two classes, as themselves
worthy of attention - but what are the facts
of woman's present condition? we are
thrown into an active hand-to-hand struggle
for existence all the time as men - we of
the middle classes have to earn our own
bread - with very badly trained hands &
brains it must be sorrowfully confessed!
we do not all divinity easily come
in a suffering class, not all domestic
incapable of anything beyond sleep &
dissipation. The battle of life is a very serious
matter to some of us, we are very often
kindred & heavily weighted. Let us
peak of us, active, not impractical but
as a representative woman of the broad
winning class. without any early education
whatsoever, we are being taught to read &

write, & there is not an exaggerated or
a literal statement - I have fought my
own way & made my own bread by
literature for 23 years. I have never owned
a Patron, - I have never been backed up
by a friendly clique - but honestly
independently & straightly, & by my self
in might have done. I have worked
& earned, always under disadvantages.
I have been named newspaper-writer
to some extent, but my area is limited
& my powers are unequal to the best kind
of work, owing to the want of those
advantages & opportunities which men have.
You meet in clubs & societies, dinners,
study-club new thoughts, hear a multiplying
of views, the work is not as a rule
not self-solved. We women select from
again from the poor brain unaided.
Hence the temperate power of woman's
work. It is always more single-lined
her own - instead of being enriched, as yours
by the contact of other minds & perhaps
experience knowledge. When we are admitted
into societies then we are admitted into

something that infinitely enlarges &
enlarges our horizon. We may not bring
away a large collection of definite facts
but we hear the arguments of clever men
we listen to the various modes of thought
to the methods of discussion, we sense the
the presence of the living thought - the
living word - instead of being only what
the reader reads. - But I need
not argue for the advantage ^{to be} of
attending scientific meetings - If there
are any able people, no person. You
know how few opportunities we women
have for getting any cement or solace
together with men. We meet you in "Society" with
crowds of friends about, in an atmosphere
of finery & artificiality - Suppose I, or
any woman - let her be as fascinating
as possible - were to bombard you with
scientific facts - would you not rather stop
to the stupidest little girl who had not
a thought more for history than
begin a discussion on the origin of
species, on the birthplace of the Gallies -
where reptiles & fish gave rise to land
things? - And would you not think it
better for you, ladies, that she should have been
able to have attended Dr. Lillies' or
any other scientific series. I do know
himself instead of being inclined to borrow
from "mistakenly"? If then we

30, FITZROY STREET,
FITZROY SQUARE, W.



are not to speak of those or scientific
things in "books", & are short & not true
almost all scientific "societies". How
are we to learn? By books, &? But
books are not always readable,
& books are lengthy & read; &
lectures are often the result of a
circumstances, & sticking form. I
remember now from a lecture
than from a book, & then one has
happened. The real student says -
the kind afternoon lecture? - you
will say. They are hypothetical. To
a woman like myself utterly un-
allowable. I cannot afford
the working time, & I cannot
afford the money. - This Royal
Institution is a favour very hard
to obtain. I have been there only
three in my life. - I sent something
of the Ethnological, simple, without

fining or parade, an u.s. beat
& great to my mind. I don't
mean to make money by them,
but they feed us. They are relaxa-
tions after a hard days work, &
they are not dignified. They
bring us in contact with ourselves
very, one of home feeling
cheerful, excited, untroubled, from
that contact. The most valuable
friendship I ever made was
as the others. I don't see it
(I am full). I want to see them
as a child. Then renewed our
old acquaintance / I have
learned much from the discussion.
I ask you then to reconsider
the question of our expulsion.
I have already returned
on it; to let my earnings.

major influence for the
unpermeable. I have
written hurriedly, not caring
to write so precisely as clarity.
I have jumbled up my
names — like a woman!
But the chief line of argument
with me is — that we women
have to earn our bread all
the same — you — that we
are brain-workers all the
same (with what a difference!)
as you men — & that it is
not fair to exclude us from
the means of knowledge of
active thought, & to exclude
views — such as we get from
attending Cairns' discussions —
on the simple plea of sex

womanhood. —

I pray you with all my
strength to keep us at
attendance at the Ethnological
meetings. When you are going
to discard hazardous papers,
give us warning, & we will
stay away. Else, let us be
pre sent to attend —

I do not ask you an answer
to this. & apologise very
sincerely for the length of
my petition — for it is a
petition not a letter — For me
personally this meeting seemed
then in these times is of priceless
value. It is the only way in which
I can see them, not having a home
or a husband or any personal means
of making their acquaintance.

Yours respectfully E. Lyne Austin

The Order of Creation: The Conflict between Genesis and Geology

A Controversy between the Hon. W.E. Gladstone, Prof. Max Müller, Prof. T.H. Huxley,
M. Réville, E. Lynn Linton. pp. 161-178.

In the *Nineteenth Century* of last November Mr. Gladstone published a remarkable article which has already received two answers. Professor Huxley has dealt with its science, Professor Max Muller with its mythology and etymology; and even the "Ulysses of dialectics" will, I think, find it hard to reply to or refute either the one or the other. This protest of mine is founded on a much smaller point, but one on which I am entitled to speak, inasmuch as Mr. Gladstone did me the honor to allude to me directly and by quotation, though not by name.

The phrase to which I object occurs in a paragraph which expresses surprise "not only at the fact, but at the manner in which in this day, writers, whose name is legion, unimpeached in character and abounding in talent, not only put away from them, cast into shadow or the very gulf of negation itself, the conception of a deity, an acting and ruling deity. Of this belief, which has satisfied the doubts, and wiped away the tears, and found guidance for the footsteps of so many a weary wanderer on earth, which among the best and greatest of our race has been so cherished by those who had it, and so longed and sought for by those who had it not, we might suppose that if at length we had discovered that it was in the light of truth untenable, that the accumulated testimony of man was worthless, and that his wisdom was but folly, yet at least the decencies of mourning would be vouchsafed to this irreparable loss. Instead of this, it is with a *joy and exultation that might almost recall the frantic orgies of the Commune* that this, at least at first sight, terrific and overwhelming calamity is accepted and recorded as a gain." (The italics are my own.)

The phrase is cruel, misdirecting, unjust. As reverently as those who believe that the Bible is the word of God – the *ipsissima verba* – and the church of Christ the sole ark of salvation, do we, who doubt of both, worship the truth and stretch our hands out to the

light. If we think that such religions as the world has hitherto seen have been subjective and not given from without – self-generated and not self-revealed – it is not because we are indifferent to the religious idea, not because we want to get rid of a restraining moral influence, nor yet because we despise the consolations of faith and the peace which follows prayer. It is simply because certain things integral to those revelations, cannot stand the test of scientific truth and fall to pieces under the touch of reason. And what is this joy, this exultation, to which Mr Gladstone assigns so shameful a parallelism? Is it our sense of freedom, through our deliverance from the cruel superstitions which have overwhelmed brave men with abject terror, reduced feeble minds to imbecility and inflamed ardent ones to madness – which have ruined the happiness of the multitudes, destroyed innumerable lives, and put instruments of torture into the hands of fanatics wherewith to oppress their victims, till the hell they preached was translated to earth, and the devil they painted was embodied in their own persons? Must we bury that devil with the “decencies of mourning,” and hang up wreaths of parsley and crowns of immortelles on the closed gates of hell? Yet neither one nor the other is to be extricated from the correlative ideas of God and heaven as given to us by the Bible and the Christian churches. What is our exultation? To feel that we are men, surrounded by unfathomable mysteries, but free from the fears which desolate and degrade – to feel that we can look up to heaven above unabashed if questioning – that we are one with the nature that we do not yet understand, but part of the whole, and not ruled off to a special destiny of eternal torment – to have broken our ghastly idol, the Moloch of our sorrow, bloodstained and tear be-dewed, and to have enshrined in its place Infinity and Law - this is our joy, deep, solemn, self-respecting, abiding; and we would that all humanity shared it. But to question the objective truth of anthropomorphic religions accepted by man as revelations, and to have cast from us the hideous superstitions bound up with them, is not to repeat the “frantic orgies of the Commune.”

The theory of direct revelation creates a dilemma from which I see no escape. Either it is necessary for the spiritual well-being of man that truths taught by God himself should be known and believed, or it is not. If the former then we are landed in the mystery of Partiality and the Favored Nation; with the corollary of injustice to those excluded for no fault of their own – by the mere accident of their birth deprived of benefits essential

to their eternal happiness. If the latter, then it seems scarcely worth the trouble for Omnipotence to have delivered a message in the tremendous form assumed by Christians, if the fate of the excluded is not touched thereby, and everything is made pleasant at last for everyone all round. If we accept the theory of a Unified Truth delivered by direct revelation, we are forced into the position occupied by Roman Catholics and Mohammedans – that is, the exclusion of unbelievers from the privileges promised to the faithful – and the consequent injustice of the divine being, who favors some and disinherits others, irrespective of personal merits and for motives of pure caprice.

Better than a divine source seems to me the purely human origin of this belief in a specialized and partial revelation, and how it is the translation into religion of that passionate patriotism which makes its own tribe, race, nation, the finest in the world, the preservation and supremacy of which is of the first importance. It is no other than the egotism which is necessary for self-preservation but which cannot stand the test of reason exterior to itself. Standing apart from all, and impartial all, we can judge better than when we are face to face with one alone. And standing apart, judging for the whole human race and on the broad grounds of equal justice, we see how infinitely unjust would be any partial revelation – any creation of a favored nation which should exclude from participation in its benefits the innocent disinherited. If we find joy, too, in this deliverance from the injustice involved in partial, local, and racial revelations – revelations made to some and withheld from others – it is because we open the doors of truth to all humanity alike – making it general and not special – because we think our spiritual democracy a nobler thing than the creation of an aristocracy among souls, where inherited belief in Christ, Mohammed, Jehovah, or Vishnù confers celestial rank and eternal privileges, denied to the excluded. But to see only the mind of man in concrete religious systems is not to deny or despise the religious idea – the instinct for reverence for the Highest Ideal – the worship of which is inspired by the sense of the Infinity – the confession of that Something beyond ourselves and our knowledge, which some men call God, and others the Unknowable, and others, again, the Law of Righteousness by which we are governed and to which we strive to attain.

The very fact that there are more religions than one in the world, and that each consoles and sustains its worshiper, surely of itself proves the subjective quality of creeds. Who can deny the power which belief in the gods of Olympus had on men? When wild thoughts and tumultuous desires disturbed the Greek girl's heart, did she derive no calming spiritual influence when she fled to the altar of Artemis and laid her offerings before the goddess, beseeching her divine support? Where was the difference between her prayer and that of her younger sister who kneels before the shrine of the Virgin today, or turns in fear of herself to her patron saint, her guardian angel, asking each to defend her from sinful thoughts? Was the story of Actæon, slain for his presumptuous intrusion on divine privacy, less real to the Greek than is to the Jew that of fifty thousand and three score and ten men of Beth-shemesh, smitten because they had looked into the Ark of the Lord? When women, in their hour of trial, cried out to Lucina, was it with a different feeling from that which makes the Sicilian invoke the aid of la Madonna della Catena? Was the mystery of the birth of Dionysos more incredible than that of the Miraculous Conception, or the avatar of Crishna? Like our own Divine Triad, unseen by excess of light, hidden behind the clouds, veiled in the summer sunshine, heard in the tempest, and present in the darkness of the night, ever unseen but ever there, the gods of Olympus drew in council together and watched over the affairs of the men they had made. And the pious believed what they did not see, and worshipped by faith, not knowledge. When some bold skeptic denying possibility, or ardent believer seeking to realise his faith, climbed to the top of the Sacred Hill searching for proof, what did he find? Was there but one feather of eagle or dove, of peacock or of owl, to attest the truth of the greater by the evidence of the less? – one solitary stain of the old grey stone swept by the wind and bleached by the snow, which showed where the nectar had fallen from Hebe's cup or Ganymede's unpractised hand? – one spangle of gold from the girdle worn by the "Most Beautiful?" Was there one smallest material proof of the existence of those Divine Twelve, to whom so many temples had been raised, so many prayers addressed? Do we believe their objective existence now? and have we buried them with the "decencies of mourning?" What to us is that vision of Athene which inspired the artist and cheered the faint and feeble? – what the worth of those processions and prayers, those offerings and sacrifices, which then were held all-powerful to avert war or secure victory, to give good crops to the

land and bring divine favour on the devout? What to us are those divine advocacies or enmities in which Achaian and Trojan so implicitly trusted? Do we believe in the visit of Jove and Mercury to Baucis and Philomen – even those of us who accept as divine the stories in the Bible of how God and his angels came down to visit Adam and Eve, Abram and Sara, Moses and Mary? Where are the satyrs who frightened the nymphs in the woods, and the fauns who linked the human with the brute? Where are the rude gods of the river, fathers of men? – the Eumnides and Ate, Styx and Cerberus? Do we not now confess their phantasmal, subjective, self-generated existence? Do we not say: “These things never were, but were only thought to be?” Yet one of the charges which cost Socrates his life was that he despised the tutelary deities of the state, *putting in their place another divinity*; which was as if a medieval Spaniard should have denied the actual appearance of Saint Jago at the battle of Clavijo; or his brother monks have questioned the holy visitation to Fra Angelico; or as when some modern thinker stands apart from the anthropomorphism of the Christian creed, doubts direct revelation, and questions the divine authorship of the first chapter of Genesis, in favor of unchangeable law and progressive improvement in knowledge, brain-power, and cosmic conceptions.

Admit the theory of an Omnipotent Artificer outside law – of an Author of Creation who could have made all things differently if he would – and we are caught in a network of contradictions from which there is no possibility of freeing ourselves. Where do we find the benevolence of that acting and ruling deity, belief in whom has, truly enough, “satisfied the doubts, wiped away the tears, and found guidance for the footsteps of so many a weary wanderer on the earth?” Not in nature, of which man is but one manifestation among the countless millions. All through nature we find pain and strife and death as the character of existence. The weak are the prey of the strong, and life must incessantly be sacrificed that life may continue to exist. We make great account of our own pains, and put up prayers in churches when certain microscopic organisms have taken possession of us, and are rapidly destroying our vitality; but who prays Omnipotence for the small crab held down by the big one, and slowly picked to death by those ruthless pincers tearing fragment after fragment from the quivering flesh beneath the shell? What feeble winged creature invokes supernatural aid against the terrible dragon-fly, the murderous wasp, bearing down on it for destruction? Look at the

spider, the vulture, the tiger, the cannibal and the tyrant among men. Are they not all parts of one great whole – integral to the creation as it is – different manifestations of the same law? But if not the result of law, working inexorably and automatically from its own center, then are they the deliberate work of an independent creator, who might have done differently and more mercifully if he would. In which theory lies the most reasonableness and the most humility? – in that which confesses ignorance of the *causa causans*, or in that which creates unanswerable contradictions because of its declaration of knowledge, and its ascription of pain, misery, and death to the will of a beneficent deity and an omnipotent and all-wise father?

If there be any truth in science at all, and astronomy, geology, chemistry, biology are not so many delusions of the senses, there was a time when our ancestor – whom, for want of a better term, we call Primitive Man – was removed from the brute only in so much as he had a more erect carriage, a little bigger brain, and more completely differentiated members. Of religion, morality, decency, pity, social law, patriotism, he understood no more than the ape, his brother. He was as much outside the pale of the moral law as the spider or the vulture. In his murders, his cannibalism, his bestialities was no sin, because there was no knowledge. He was simply a brute, inclosing in himself potentialities of future development. The product of the law of evolution, he had within him the power of evolution. By slow degrees his brain grew and his brain ripened. He learnt the value of fixed laws for government, and the consequent need of obedience, with punishment for infraction. He developed a conscience, and he developed morality; and among his moral qualities he developed pity for suffering. Fear of the pitiless elements, of the ferocity of wild beasts, ignorance of causes and consequent fear of results, together with dreams, sickness and death, had already created an Elemental God. When the moral conscience was born, the creation of a Moral God, the pitiful helper of man, followed as of necessity – by the same law as that which created the elemental deity, and made visible fetishes of stones and trees, prefacing the graven images and painted idols. Imperfect social conditions necessitated a Court of Ultimate Appeal. The man oppressed here by his stronger superior, and helpless in a state of society where might was right and law was not justice, needed someone to redress his wrongs – if not now nor here, yet in the future – the beyond. The tyranny of

the potent kings must be punished by the wrath of the one omnipotent; the sufferings of the innocent and helpless must be avenged by the eternal ruler who holds the scales and metes out justice. But our God was, and is, the transcript of our social condition – the measure of our knowledge. The social and personal wrongs of which we make so much account are but the translation into human action of the material sufferings pervading all animate creation. Why must a man be eternally compensated for a cruel and untimely death, or for the loss of his worldly goods and gear, while the worm, pulled asunder by two blackbirds or slowly devoured by flies – which tried Frederick Robertson's faith so sharply – the smaller lobster, which is ejected from the safe hiding place among the rocks and thrown out into the waste of the sea to perish by its enemies, is best fulfilling its appointed destiny, without which life would not exist at all. The necessity for a Court of Ultimate Appeal and a righteous Judge who shall compensate those who have been afflicted here, while punishing the oppressors, seems to me no more a necessity when life is over than compensation for the worm or the lobster. Each is the same thing, differentiated by circumstances and conditions – the homogeneity of nature and the invariability of universal law being surely among the first lessons to be learned by those who dare to think.

Better and truer than the individual consolations of eternity are the general ameliorations wrought in time. By the law of evolution which rules society – the expression of man's mind – just as it rules the translation of organisms, wrong and injustice create better laws when the human brain has advanced to the point when it can understand that injustice and shape a nobler ideal. The world, which in its barbarous nonage prostrates itself at the feet of crowned robbers covetous of their neighbors' vineyards – of royal murderers setting obstructive husbands in the front of the battle that the wives may be possessed in peace – in its manhood sees the greater good of equal justice to all, and preaches the nobler law of rights and duties as against that of submission and privileges. Specialized inheritance of the few enlarges itself into the generous democracy of Christ, which swept down the barriers of the court and rent the veil of the temple. The Favored Nation was called on to share; the aristocrats of heaven had to enlarge their borders, and the Elect to add new thrones to their number. But as presbyter, once a liberal protest, grew to be only "old priest writ large," so Christianity,

which was in the beginning as wide as humanity, by the law of consolidation and contraction working in things spiritual as well as material, has become as close a guild and as exclusive a sect as the Judaism it was pledged to displace. By the dogma of a Unified Truth, of a divine and direct revelation, giving privileges to those who believe and entailing loss on those who are excluded, the Saviour, whose salvation was in his universality, has been narrowed into a sectarian deity, like Jehovah, like Allah, like Vishnù. It is the Agnostic who now takes up this lapsed creed of universality – who preaches afresh the democracy of souls – who, in his belief that the religious idea is one to be improved and finally perfected by evolution and knowledge, sees the true salvation of men and their final redemption from error. In this belief lie his hope for the future and his patience with the present. He trusts to time to carry on the work of mental enlargement as it has already, together with that of physical improvement; he trusts to science to give us increase of veritable knowledge – and he knows that his trust is not in vain.

All bitterness and reproach, all persecution and scorn, are among the things dead and done with to the Agnostic. As little as he would curse the elements which wrecked his house and ruined his land would he curse – though he would prevent – the spiritual cruelties of his brother, acting according to the law of an uneducated mind, a brutish nature, and walking by the dim light of that dawn which is not yet morning. He knows that humanity must fulfil the universal law, and from low, amorphous beginnings reach up to moral nobleness and spiritual beauty. He knows that all society is experimental, all laws are tentative; that the stream of tendency does indeed make for righteousness, with many windings and much doubling back on its way, but always flowing onward from the darkness to the light – from the narrow rock in the mountain to the broad and infinite sea. In the abhorrence which good men feel for crime he sees the ultimate destruction of crime; in the great Man-God which forms the ideal of all religions he sees the projection of humanity itself on the screen of the future; in the fact that this humanity has ever touched the level of Moses, Buddha, Christ, he sees the possibilities of the whole race. He knows and humbly confesses the great wall of the Unknown between him and the Ultimate Verity. But in measuring where he stands now from that brutish Primitive who was his ancestor, he sees no limit to further infinite advance. He

sees no limit save that of the individual. Every man must be born helpless, and if he lives to the end of his tether he must die decayed, carrying his experiences with him. All the same the race survives.

Let it be so. The individual is nothing. He is no more than the diatom, the bit of protoplasm which helps to make a geological stratum and a biological world. From the individual as he is now – striving after righteousness, suffering for truth, offering himself as a fragment in the great stepping stone – will come the race which shall some day be as gods, knowing good and evil. The storms of the present may wither the vines and blight the fig trees, but the roots remain; and it is better to be among the eternal roots of Yggdrasil, barren of beauty for ourselves, but helping in the life and solace of others, than to be one of the fairest of the annuals – things born of the day and perishing with the day, leaving nothing permanent nor solid behind. Ah! Better than all personal gain of riches or of love, which perish with our lives, is that immortality of influence found in the example of those who have done a noble deed or spoken a brave truth! Worst of all the errors, most deadly of all the irreligious denials, is that egotistic preference of individual gain over the general well-being. Not against those who doubt the divine personality they cannot see – who question the fatherly care and beneficence of an omnipotent artificer who has made sorrow, suffering disease, and death necessities of existence – but against the egotists who make the unit of more importance than the whole should such men as Mr. Gladstone turn their arms. Speculative opinions are incapable of proof, but moral heroism is a certain quantity; and the belief in and practice of Altruism are essentially parts of that code which has come to the front in the future. Once men did not see the higher ideal contained in the spiritualized Lord whom Paul preached, over the deities whom Ovid vulgarized. They preferred their joyous hymns and picturesque processions to the colder, more sublime, less tangible worship of the “pale Galilean,” belief in whom included the socialism of general poverty for this world and the hope of happiness transferred from life here to life after death. What was it to the joyous Greek, to the strong and sensual Roman, to whom Hades was but a world of shadows, to be told to give up all here – all that was lovable, pleasurable, tangible – for the hypothetical joys of heaven? Did he not say; “I will take when I can and hold by what I know?” just as those to whom Altruism is unwelcome because of its destruction

of egotism say; “What to me is the race? *I* suffer – *I* love – *I* desire; what do I care for the rest?” But it has to come. The nobler life is inevitable; and the day when Duty shall overcome Pleasure, and Altruism be stronger than Individualism, is as certain in the future as is the calculation of an eclipse or a new discovery in chemistry.

The loss out of his life of a personal deity does not dismay the Agnostic, and the destruction of his belief in direct revelation has not left him desolate. As a brave man knows how to die and pass into the darkness of the grave with calmness and dignity, so a brave soul knows how to live by the light of an educated conscience only – that conscience being the result of gradual development, as much as is the sense of justice and the consciousness of shame. He waits for the time when better knowledge shall enable men to reconcile the mystery of the material cruelty of nature with the pity, the justice, the moral sense, which are the active and substantive possessions of man only – who, after all, is only matter conscious of itself to the highest degree yet attained. He does not know why the House of Life should be thus divided against itself, nor why he, who is only a higher translation of the Force which expresses itself in the worm and the crab, should feel pity when he sees the one pulled asunder by two blackbirds – a sickening kind of indignation when the living flesh of the other is being slowly picked out by the pincers of the stronger. One with nature, and the product of material things, his revulsion from the circumstances of his origin is not to be explained by the theory of a moral sense – that something extra added by the God who has originated these circumstances. This would be to make the creator ashamed of his own creation, and to make man his judge and assessor. It is a mystery; and the greatest of the many by which we are surrounded. Why matter, fully conscious of itself in the mind of man, should find the inevitable law, the unalterable conditions of life, cruel, and should do what it can to ameliorate them, is an enigma not to be explained away by the story of Adam and Eve – a talking snake standing erect – a God who walked in the garden in the cool of the evening – a Forbidden Tree and a Tree of Life – or any other of the mythological circumstances to which the orthodox pin their faith, finding them sufficient for their peace.

Let us go out into the open and judge for ourselves. Let us climb to the top of Mount Olympus, of Ararat, of Meru; let us lift up the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, enter the Sepulchre, touch the stone at Mecca, feel the wheels of the car of Juggernaut, and test what we find by the aid of reason and such science as we possess. If we find there things which vanish as we look – things vaporous as clouds that cannot be held – unstable as the river mist which cannot be compelled – can we still believe in the objective existence of the faiths bound up with these things? Or shall we not rather say they are all of the same order – prophet and pythoness, angel and demigod, Madonna and Hera, Chrishna and Christ, Jehovah and Zeus – they are all names, not persons, and all represent analogous conditions of brain differentiated by climate and the tendencies of the race? Beyond them all lies the boundless and impersonal Infinite – the grandeur of impartial law – the prizes to be won from the depths of the as yet unknown – and the one concrete imperishable essence of all religion – our duty to our fellow-men, and our duty in self respect to our selves.

Always the popular faith has been the last word, the supreme revelation, to those who believe; and always the first doubters – the Uhlans preceding the army of destroyers and subsequent reconstructors – have been made martyrs to their negation. To be said to doubt the tutelar deities of the city cost Socrates his life – Socrates, who, before all men, taught reverence and preached virtue. To deny that Jesus, the Son of Mary, was God Incarnate has cost many hundreds of lives. To question the divine mission of Mohammed has been as fatal to thousands as was the denial of the supremacy of Jehovah to the priests of Baal. The world reveres its idols, and looks neither to the fashion of their make nor to the passions they typify. Jealous or cruel, punishing the children for the father's sin or demanding the sacrifice of the innocent for the redemption of the guilty – these idols are precious beyond all else, and their worship is held as dear as life itself. And ever the deniers of their divinity have been accused of preaching the wildest immorality as well as the most godless irreligion, and of desiring to break all the wholesome restraints which keep men from crime and vice and force them to obey the moral law. "The frantic orgies of the Commune!" Yes, that is the modern name for the old stone. It is always the same stone, renamed according to circumstances. But by and by the world comes up to these pioneers. Then it ceases to

revile, and takes their place, crying out: "We knew all this before; you are telling us no new thing."

There is no more sin in questioning the objective truth of religious systems than there is in verifying a scientific position. We seek the truth, and the fact of this seeking is the proof that we have not yet found. "Judicial blindness" is the phrase of certainty so far as the individual is concerned. But his realization does nothing for another; on the contrary, that one man realizes one thing and his brother another incontestably proves the subjective quality of each creed. The cry of the human heart is yet unanswered, and the reconciling medium between man's moral sense and the natural law is yet to seek. The world stands with parched lips, waiting for this dew of Hermon by which its thirst will be slacked; and till we can reconcile these two opposing manifestations of the same Force it must remain unsatisfied. The solution is not to be found in the doctrine of Original Perfection, the Fall, and the consequent sufferings of all life for the childish disobedience of one man. Meanwhile, we who believe in the future of humanity by the law of progress wait, hoping and of good heart. Schools are our temples; science is our ritual; time is our heaven; the human race contains our future gods; and the Satan we have to conquer and to chain is that arid Egotism which despises for the race what it cannot enjoy in its own person, and cares more for the salvation of its own individuality than it does for the redemption of the world. If in this creed can be found any analogy to the frantic orgies of the Commune, I for one am content to stand in the pillory, and let Mr. Gladstone and his co-religionists pelt me at their pleasure.